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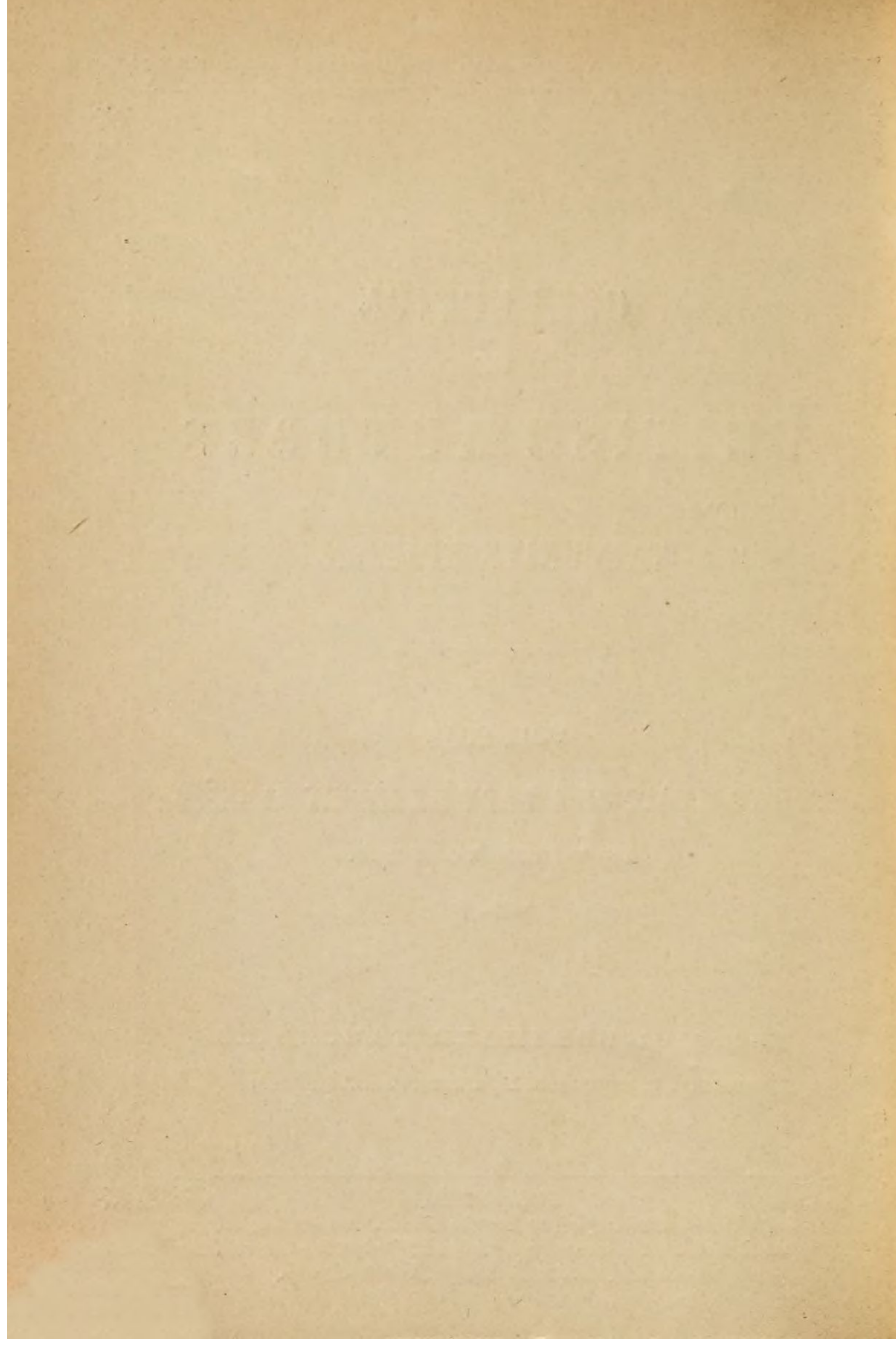
THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY BY HENRY JAMES, JR.
IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. 3.

LEIPZIG: BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ.

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THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY BY HENRY JAMES, JR.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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TAUCHNITZ EDITION

NO. 5014

THE PORTFOLIO OF A LADY OF HONOUR

IN THREE VOLUMES

NO. 5015

THE
PORTRAIT OF A LADY

BY

HENRY JAMES, JR.,

AUTHOR OF

“THE EUROPEANS,” “WASHINGTON SQUARE,” ETC.

AUTHORIZED EDITION.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1882.



THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY.

I.

ISABEL had not seen much of Madame Merle since her marriage, this lady having indulged in frequent absences from Rome. At one time she had spent six months in England; at another she had passed a portion of a winter in Paris. She had made numerous visits to distant friends, and gave countenance to the idea that for the future she should be a less inveterate Roman than in the past. As she had been inveterate in the past only in the sense of constantly having an apartment in one of the sunniest niches of the Pincian—an apartment which often stood empty—this suggested a prospect of almost constant absence; a danger which Isabel at one period had been much inclined to deplore. Familiarity had modified in some degree her first impression of Madame Merle, but it had not essentially altered it; there was still a kind of wonder of admiration in it. Madame Merle was armed at all points; it was a pleasure to see a person so completely equipped for the social battle. She carried her flag discreetly, but her weapons were polished steel, and she used them with a skill which struck

Isabel as more and more that of a veteran. She was never weary, never overcome with disgust; she never appeared to need rest or consolation. She had her own ideas; she had of old exposed a great many of them to Isabel, who knew also that under an appearance of extreme self-control her highly-cultivated friend concealed a rich sensibility. But her will was mistress of her life; there was something brilliant in the way she kept going. It was as if she had learned the secret of it—as if the art of life were some clever trick that she had guessed. Isabel, as she herself grew older, became acquainted with revulsions, with disgust; there were days when the world looked black, and she asked herself with some peremptoriness what it was that she was pretending to live for. Her old habit had been to live by enthusiasm, to fall in love with suddenly-perceived possibilities, with the idea of a new attempt. As a young girl, she used to proceed from one little exaltation to the other; there were scarcely any dull places between. But Madame Merle had suppressed enthusiasm; she fell in love now-a-days with nothing; she lived entirely by reason, by wisdom. There were hours when Isabel would have given anything for lessons in this art; if Madame Merle had been near, she would have made an appeal to her. She had become aware more than before of the advantage of being like that—of having made one's self a firm surface, a sort of corselet of silver. But, as I say, it was not till the winter, during which we lately renewed acquaintance with our heroine, that Madame Merle made a continuous stay in Rome. Isabel now saw more of her than she had done since her marriage; but by this time Isabel's needs and inclinations

had considerably changed. It was not at present to Madame Merle that she would have applied for instruction; she had lost the desire to know this lady's clever trick. If she had troubles she must keep them to herself, and if life was difficult it would not make it easier to confess herself beaten. Madame Merle was doubtless of great use to herself, and an ornament to any circle; but was she—would she be—of use to others in periods of refined embarrassment? The best way to profit by Madame Merle—this indeed Isabel had always thought—was to imitate her; to be as firm and bright as she. She recognised no embarrassments, and Isabel, considering this fact, determined, for the fiftieth time, to brush aside her own. It seemed to her, too, on the renewal of an intercourse which had virtually been interrupted, that Madame Merle was changed—that she pushed to the extreme a certain rather artificial fear of being indiscreet. Ralph Touchett, we know, had been of the opinion that she was prone to exaggeration, to forcing the note—was apt, in the vulgar phrase, to overdo it. Isabel had never admitted this charge—had never, indeed, quite understood it; Madame Merle's conduct, to her perception, always bore the stamp of good taste, was always "quiet." But in this matter of not wishing to intrude upon the inner life of the Osmond family, it at last occurred to our heroine that she overdid it a little. That, of course, was not the best taste; that was rather violent. She remembered too much that Isabel was married; that she had now other interests; that though she, Madame Merle, had known Gilbert Osmond and his little Pansy very well, better almost than any one, she was after all not one of them. She

was on her guard; she never spoke of their affairs till she was asked, even pressed—as when her opinion was wanted; she had a dread of seeming to meddle. Madame Merle was as candid as we know, and one day she candidly expressed this dread to Isabel.

“I must be on my guard,” she said; “I might so easily, without suspecting it, offend you. You would be right to be offended, even if my intention should have been of the purest. I must not forget that I knew your husband long before you did; I must not let that betray me. If you were a silly woman you might be jealous. You are not a silly woman; I know that perfectly. But neither am I; therefore I am determined not to get into trouble. A little harm is very soon done; a mistake is made before one knows it. Of course, if I had wished to make love to your husband, I had ten years to do it in, and nothing to prevent; so it isn’t likely I shall begin to-day, when I am so much less attractive than I was. But if I were to annoy you by seeming to take a place that doesn’t belong to me, you wouldn’t make that reflection; you would simply say that I was forgetting certain differences. I am determined not to forget them. Of course a good friend isn’t always thinking of that; one doesn’t suspect one’s friends of injustice. I don’t suspect you, my dear, in the least; but I suspect human nature. Don’t think I make myself uncomfortable; I am not always watching myself. I think I sufficiently prove it in talking to you as I do now. All I wish to say is, however, that if you were to be jealous—that is the form it would take—I should be sure to think it was a little my fault. It certainly wouldn’t be your husband’s.”

Isabel had had three years to think over Mrs. Touchett's theory that Madame Merle had made Gilbert Osmond's marriage. We know how she had at first received it. Madame Merle might have made Gilbert Osmond's marriage, but she certainly had not made Isabel Archer's. That was the work of—Isabel scarcely knew what: of nature, of providence, of fortune, of the eternal mystery of things. It was true that her aunt's complaint had been not so much of Madame Merle's activity as of her duplicity; she had brought about the marriage and then she had denied her guilt. Such guilt would not have been great, to Isabel's mind; she couldn't make a crime of Madame Merle's having been the cause of the most fertile friendship she had ever formed. That occurred to her just before her marriage, after her little discussion with her aunt. If Madame Merle had desired the event, she could only say it had been a very happy thought. With her, moreover, she had been perfectly straightforward; she had never concealed her high opinion of Gilbert Osmond. After her marriage Isabel discovered that her husband took a less comfortable view of the matter; he seldom spoke of Madame Merle, and when his wife alluded to her he usually let the allusion drop.

"Don't you like her?" Isabel had once said to him. "She thinks a great deal of you."

"I will tell you once for all," Osmond had answered. "I liked her once better than I do to-day. I am tired of her, and I am rather ashamed of it. She is so good! I am glad she is not in Italy; it's a sort of rest. Don't talk of her too much; it seems to bring her back. She will come back in plenty of time."

Madame Merle, in fact, had come back before it was too late—too late, I mean, to recover whatever advantage she might have lost. But meantime, if, as I have said, she was somewhat changed, Isabel's feelings were also altered. Her consciousness of the situation was as acute as of old, but it was much less satisfying. A dissatisfied mind, whatever else it lack, is rarely in want of reasons; they bloom as thick as buttercups in June. The fact of Madame Merle having had a hand in Gilbert Osmond's marriage ceased to be one of her titles to consideration; it seemed, after all, that there was not so much to thank her for. As time went on there was less and less; and Isabel once said to herself that perhaps without her these things would not have been. This reflection, however, was instantly stifled; Isabel felt a sort of horror at having made it. "Whatever happens to me, let me not be unjust," she said; "let me bear my burdens myself, and not shift them upon others!" This disposition was tested, eventually, by that ingenious apology for her present conduct which Madame Merle saw fit to make, and of which I have given a sketch; for there was something irritating—there was almost an air of mockery—in her neat discriminations and clear convictions. In Isabel's mind to-day there was nothing clear; there was a confusion of regrets, a complication of fears. She felt helpless as she turned away from her brilliant friend, who had just made the statements I have quoted; Madame Merle knew so little what she was thinking of! Moreover, she herself was so unable to explain. Jealous of her—jealous of her with Gilbert? The idea just then suggested no near reality. She almost wished that jealousy had

been possible; it would be a kind of refreshment. Jealousy, after all, was in a sense one of the symptoms of happiness. Madame Merle, however, was wise; it would seem that she knew Isabel better than Isabel knew herself. This young woman had always been fertile in resolutions—many of them of an elevated character; but at no period had they flourished (in the privacy of her heart) more richly than to-day. It is true that they all had a family likeness; they might have been summed up in the determination that if she was to be unhappy it should not be by a fault of her own. The poor girl had always had a great desire to do her best, and she had not as yet been seriously discouraged. She wished, therefore, to hold fast to justice—not to pay herself by petty revenges. To associate Madame Merle with her disappointment would be a petty revenge—especially as the pleasure she might derive from it would be perfectly insincere. It might feed her sense of bitterness, but it would not loosen her bonds. It was impossible to pretend that she had not acted with her eyes open; if ever a girl was a free agent, she had been. A girl in love was doubtless not a free agent; but the sole source of her mistake had been within herself. There had been no plot, no snare; she had looked, and considered, and chosen. When a woman had made such a mistake, there was only one way to repair it—to accept it. One folly was enough, especially when it was to last for ever; a second one would not much set it off. In this vow of reticence there was a certain nobleness which kept Isabel going; but Madame Merle had been right, for all that, in taking her precautions.

One day, about a month after Ralph Touchett's

arrival in Rome, Isabel came back from a walk with Pansy. It was not only a part of her general determination to be just that she was at present very thankful for Pansy. It was a part of her tenderness for things that were pure and weak. Pansy was dear to her, and there was nothing in her life so much as it should be as the young girl's attachment and the pleasantness of feeling it. It was like a soft presence—like a small hand in her own; on Pansy's part it was more than an affection—it was a kind of faith. On her own side her sense of Pansy's dependence was more than a pleasure; it operated as a command, as a definite reason when motives threatened to fail her. She had said to herself that we must take our duty where we find it, and that we must look for it as much as possible. Pansy's sympathy was a kind of admonition; it seemed to say that here was an opportunity. An opportunity for what, Isabel could hardly have said; in general, to be more for the child than the child was able to be for herself. Isabel could have smiled, in these days, to remember that her little companion had once been ambiguous; for she now perceived that Pansy's ambiguities were simply her own grossness of vision. She had been unable to believe that any one could care so much—so extraordinarily much—to please. But since then she had seen this delicate faculty in operation, and she knew what to think of it. It was the whole creature—it was a sort of genius. Pansy had no pride to interfere with it, and though she was constantly extending her conquests she took no credit for them. The two were constantly together; Mrs. Osmond was rarely seen without her step-daughter. Isabel liked her company;

it had the effect of one's carrying a nosegay composed all of the same flower. And then not to neglect Pansy—not under any provocation to neglect her: this she had made an article of religion. The young girl had every appearance of being happier in Isabel's society than in that of any one save her father, whom she admired with an intensity justified by the fact that, as paternity was an exquisite pleasure to Gilbert Osmond, he had always been elaborately soft. Isabel knew that Pansy liked immensely to be with her and studied the means of pleasing her. She had decided that the best way of pleasing her was negative, and consisted in not giving her trouble—a conviction which certainly could not have had any reference to trouble already existing. She was therefore ingeniously passive and almost imaginatively docile; she was careful even to moderate the eagerness with which she assented to Isabel's propositions, and which might have implied that she thought otherwise. She never interrupted, never asked social questions, and though she delighted in approbation, to the point of turning pale when it came to her, never held out her hand for it. She only looked toward it wistfully—an attitude which, as she grew older, made her eyes the prettiest in the world. When during the second winter at the Palazzo Roccanera, she began to go to parties, to dances, she always, at a reasonable hour, lest Mrs. Osmond should be tired, was the first to propose departure. Isabel appreciated the sacrifice of the late dances, for she knew that Pansy had a passionate pleasure in this exercise, taking her steps to the music like a conscientious fairy. Society, moreover, had no drawbacks for her; she liked even the tire-

some parts—the heat of ball-rooms, the dulness of dinners, the crush at the door, the awkward waiting for the carriage. During the day, in this vehicle, beside Isabel, she sat in a little fixed appreciative posture, bending forward and faintly smiling, as if she had been taken to drive for the first time.

On the day I speak of they had been driven out of one of the gates of the city, and at the end of half-an-hour had left the carriage to await them by the roadside, while they walked away over the short grass of the Campagna, which even in the winter months is sprinkled with delicate flowers. This was almost a daily habit with Isabel, who was fond of a walk, and stepped quickly, though not so quickly as when she first came to Europe. It was not the form of exercise that Pansy loved best, but she liked it, because she liked everything; and she moved with a shorter undulation beside her stepmother, who afterwards, on their return to Rome, paid a tribute to Pansy's preferences by making the circuit of the Pincian or the Villa Borghese. Pansy had gathered a handful of flowers in a sunny hollow, far from the walls of Rome, and on reaching the Palazzo Roccanera she went straight to her room, to put them into water. Isabel passed into the drawing-room, the one she herself usually occupied, the second in order from the large ante-chamber which was entered from the staircase, and in which even Gilbert Osmond's rich devices had not been able to correct a look of rather grand nudity. Just beyond the threshold of the drawing-room she stopped short, the reason for her doing so being that she had received an impression. The impression had, in strictness, nothing unpre-

cedented; but she felt it as something new, and the soundlessness of her step gave her time to take in the scene before she interrupted it. Madame Merle sat there in her bonnet, and Gilbert Osmond was talking to her; for a minute they were unaware that she had come in. Isabel had often seen that before, certainly; but what she had not seen, or at least had not noticed—was that their dialogue had for the moment converted itself into a sort of familiar silence, from which she instantly perceived that her entrance would startle them. Madame Merle was standing on the rug, a little way from the fire; Osmond was in a deep chair, leaning back and looking at her. Her head was erect, as usual, but her eyes were bent upon his. What struck Isabel first was that he was sitting while Madame Merle stood; there was an anomaly in this that arrested her. Then she perceived that they had arrived at a desultory pause in their exchange of ideas, and were musing, face to face, with the freedom of old friends who sometimes exchange ideas without uttering them. There was nothing shocking in this; they were old friends in fact. But the thing made an image, lasting only a moment, like a sudden flicker of light. Their relative position, their absorbed mutual gaze, struck her as something detected. But it was all over by the time she had fairly seen it. Madame Merle had seen her, and had welcomed her without moving; Gilbert Osmond, on the other hand, had instantly jumped up. He presently murmured something about wanting a walk, and after having asked Madame Merle to excuse him, he left the room.

“I came to see you, thinking you would have come

in; and as you had not, I waited for you," Madame Merle said.

"Didn't he ask you to sit down?" asked Isabel, smiling.

Madame Merle looked about her.

"Ah, it's very true; I was going away."

"You must stay now."

"Certainly. I came for a reason; I have something on my mind."

"I have told you that before," Isabel said—"that it takes something extraordinary to bring you to this house."

"And you know what I have told you; that whether I come or whether I stay away, I have always the same motive—the affection I bear you."

"Yes, you have told me that."

"You look just now as if you didn't believe me," said Madame Merle.

"Ah," Isabel answered, "the profundity of your motives, that is the last thing I doubt!"

"You doubt sooner of the sincerity of my words."

Isabel shook her head gravely. "I know you have always been kind to me."

"As often as you would let me. You don't always take it; then one has to let you alone. It's not to do you a kindness, however, that I have come to-day; it's quite another affair. I have come to get rid of a trouble of my own—to make it over to you. I have been talking to your husband about it."

"I am surprised at that; he doesn't like troubles."

"Especially other people's; I know that. But neither do you, I suppose. At any rate, whether you do or not, you must help me. It's about poor Mr. Rosier."

"Ah," said Isabel, reflectively, "it's his trouble, then, not yours."

"He has succeeded in saddling me with it. He comes to see me ten times a week, to talk about Pansy."

"Yes, he wants to marry her. I know all about it."

Madame Merle hesitated a moment. "I gathered from your husband that perhaps you didn't."

"How should he know what I know? He has never spoken to me of the matter."

"It is probably because he doesn't know how to speak of it."

"It's nevertheless a sort of question in which he is rarely at fault."

"Yes, because as a general thing he knows perfectly well what to think. To-day he doesn't."

"Haven't you been telling him?" Isabel asked.

Madame Merle gave a bright, voluntary smile. "Do you know you're a little dry?"

"Yes; I can't help it. Mr. Rosier has also talked to me."

"In that there is some reason. You are so near the child."

"Ah," said Isabel, "for all the comfort I have given him! If you think me dry, I wonder what he thinks."

"I believe he thinks you can do more than you have done."

"I can do nothing."

"You can do more at least than I. I don't know what mysterious connection he may have discovered between me and Pansy; but he came to me from the first, as if I held his fortune in my hand. Now he keeps coming back, to spur me up, to know what hope there is, to pour out his feelings."

"He is very much in love," said Isabel.

"Very much—for him."

"Very much for Pansy, you might say as well."

Madame Merle dropped her eyes a moment. "Don't you think she's attractive?"

"She is the dearest little person possible; but she is very limited."

"She ought to be all the easier for Mr. Rosier to love. Mr. Rosier is not unlimited."

"No," said Isabel, "he has about the extent of one's pocket-handkerchief—the small ones, with lace." Her humour had lately turned a good deal to sarcasm, but in a moment she was ashamed of exercising it on so innocent an object as Pansy's suitor. "He is very kind, very honest," she presently added; "and he is not such a fool as he seems."

"He assures me that she delights in him," said Madame Merle.

"I don't know; I have not asked her."

"You have never sounded her a little?"

"It's not my place; it's her father's."

"Ah, you are too literal!" said Madame Merle.

"I must judge for myself."

Madame Merle gave her smile again. "It isn't easy to help you."

"To help me?" said Isabel, very seriously. "What do you mean?"

"It's easy to displease you. Don't you see how wise I am to be careful? I notify you, at any rate, as I notified Osmond, that I wash my hands of the love-affairs of Miss Pansy and Mr. Edward Rosier. *Je n'y peux rien, moi!* I can't talk to Pansy about him.

Especially," added Madame Merle, "as I don't think him a paragon of husbands."

Isabel reflected a little; after which, with a smile—"You don't wash your hands, then!" she said. Then she added, in another tone—"You can't—you are too much interested."

Madame Merle slowly rose; she had given Isabel a look as rapid as the intimation that had gleamed before our heroine a few moments before. Only, this time Isabel saw nothing. "Ask him the next time, and you will see."

"I can't ask him; he has ceased to come to the house. Gilbert has let him know that he is not welcome."

"Ah yes," said Madame Merle, "I forgot that, though it's the burden of his lamentation. He says Osmond has insulted him. All the same," she went on, "Osmond doesn't dislike him as much as he thinks." She had got up, as if to close the conversation, but she lingered, looking about her, and had evidently more to say. Isabel perceived this, and even saw the point she had in view; but Isabel also had her own reasons for not opening the way.

"That must have pleased him, if you have told him," she answered, smiling.

"Certainly I have told him; as far as that goes, I have encouraged him. I have preached patience, have said that his case is not desperate, if he will only hold his tongue and be quiet. Unfortunately he has taken it into his head to be jealous."

"Jealous?"

"Jealous of Lord Warburton, who, he says, is always here."

Isabel, who was tired, had remained sitting; but at this she also rose. "Ah!" she exclaimed simply, moving slowly to the fireplace. Madame Merle observed her as she passed and as she stood a moment before the mantel-glass, pushing into its place a wandering tress of hair.

"Poor Mr. Rosier keeps saying that there is nothing impossible in Lord Warburton falling in love with Pansy," Madame Merle went on.

Isabel was silent a little; she turned away from the glass. "It is true—there is nothing impossible," she rejoined at last, gravely and more gently.

"So I have had to admit to Mr. Rosier. So, too, your husband thinks."

"That I don't know."

"Ask him, and you will see."

"I shall not ask him," said Isabel.

"Excuse me; I forgot that you had pointed that out. Of course," Madame Merle added, "you have had infinitely more observation of Lord Warburton's behaviour than I."

"I see no reason why I shouldn't tell you that he likes my step-daughter very much."

Madame Merle gave one of her quick looks again. "Likes her, you mean—as Mr. Rosier means?"

"I don't know how Mr. Rosier means; but Lord Warburton has let me know that he is charmed with Pansy."

"And you have never told Osmond?" This observation was immediate, precipitate; it almost burst from Madame Merle's lips.

Isabel smiled a little. "I suppose he will know in time; Lord Warburton has a tongue, and knows how to express himself."

Madame Merle instantly became conscious that she had spoken more quickly than usual, and the reflection brought the colour to her cheek. She gave the treacherous impulse time to subside, and then she said, as if she had been thinking it over a little: "That would be better than marrying poor Mr. Rosier."

"Much better, I think."

"It would be very delightful; it would be a great marriage. It is really very kind of him."

"Very kind of him?"

"To drop his eyes on a simple little girl."

"I don't see that."

"It's very good of you. But after all, Pansy Osmond——"

"After all, Pansy Osmond is the most attractive person he has ever known!" Isabel exclaimed.

Madame Merle stared, and indeed she was justly bewildered. "Ah, a moment ago, I thought you seemed rather to disparage her."

"I said she was limited. And so she is. And so is Lord Warburton."

"So are we all, if you come to that. If it's no more than Pansy deserves, all the better. But if she fixes her affections on Mr. Rosier, I won't admit that she deserves it. That will be too perverse."

"Mr. Rosier's a nuisance!" cried Isabel, abruptly.

"I quite agree with you, and I am delighted to know that I am not expected to feed his flame. For the future, when he calls on me, my door shall be closed to him." And gathering her mantle together, Madame Merle prepared to depart. She was checked, however, on her progress to the door, by an inconsequent request from Isabel.

"All the same, you know, be kind to him."

She lifted her shoulders and eyebrows, and stood looking at her friend. "I don't understand your contradictions! Decidedly, I shall not be kind to him, for it will be a false kindness. I wish to see her married to Lord Warburton."

"You had better wait till he asks her."

"If what you say is true, he will ask her. Especially," said Madame Merle in a moment, "if you make him."

"If I make him?"

"It's quite in your power. You have great influence with him."

Isabel frowned a little. "Where did you learn that?"

"Mrs. Touchett told me. Not you—never!" said Madame Merle, smiling.

"I certainly never told you that."

"You might have done so when we were by way of being confidential with each other. But you really told me very little; I have often thought so since."

Isabel had thought so too, sometimes with a certain satisfaction. But she did not admit it now—perhaps because she did not wish to appear to exult in it. "You seem to have had an excellent informant in my aunt," she simply said.

"She let me know that you had declined an offer of marriage from Lord Warburton, because she was greatly vexed, and was full of the subject. Of course I think you have done better in doing as you did. But if you wouldn't marry Lord Warburton yourself, make him the reparation of helping him to marry some one else."

Isabel listened to this with a face which persisted in not reflecting the bright expressiveness of Madame Merle's. But in a moment she said, reasonably and gently enough, "I should be very glad indeed if, as regards Pansy, it could be arranged." Upon which her companion, who seemed to regard this as a speech of good omen, embraced her more tenderly than might have been expected, and took her departure.

II.

OSMOND touched on this matter that evening for the first time; coming very late into the drawing-room, where she was sitting alone. They had spent the evening at home, and Pansy had gone to bed; he himself had been sitting since dinner in a small apartment in which he had arranged his books and which he called his study. At ten o'clock Lord Warburton had come in, as he always did when he knew from Isabel that she was to be at home; he was going somewhere else, and he sat for half-an-hour. Isabel, after asking him for news of Ralph, said very little to him, on purpose; she wished him to talk with the young girl. She pretended to read; she even went after a little to the piano; she asked herself whether she might not leave the room. She had come little by little to think well of the idea of Pansy's becoming the wife of the master of beautiful Lockleigh, though at first it had not presented itself in a manner to excite her enthusiasm. Madame Merle, that afternoon, had applied the match to an accumulation of inflammable material. When Isabel was unhappy, she always looked about her—partly from impulse and partly by theory—for some form of exertion. She could never rid herself of the conviction that unhappiness was a state of disease; it was suffering as opposed to action. To act, to do something—it hardly mattered

what—would therefore be an escape, perhaps in some degree a remedy. Besides, she wished to convince herself that he had done everything possible to content her husband; she was determined not to be haunted by images of a flat want of zeal. It would please him greatly to see Pansy married to an English nobleman, and justly please him, since this nobleman was such a fine fellow. It seemed to Isabel that if she could make it her duty to bring about such an event, she should play the part of a good wife. She wanted to be that; she wanted to be able to believe, sincerely, that she had been that. Then, such an undertaking had other recommendations. It would occupy her, and she desired occupation. It would even amuse her, and if she could really amuse herself she perhaps might be saved. Lastly, it would be a service to Lord Warburton, who evidently pleased himself greatly with the young girl. It was a little odd that he should—being what he was; but there was no accounting for such impressions. Pansy might captivate any one—any one, at least, but Lord Warburton. Isabel would have thought her too small, too slight, perhaps even too artificial for that. There was always a little of the doll about her, and that was not what Lord Warburton had been looking for. Still, who could say what men looked for? They looked for what they found; they knew what pleased them only when they saw it. No theory was valid in such matters, and nothing was more unaccountable or more natural than anything else. If he had cared for *her* it might seem odd that he cared for Pansy, who was so different; but he had not cared for her so much as he supposed. Or if he had, he had completely got

over it, and it was natural that as that affair had failed, he should think that something of quite another sort might succeed. Enthusiasm, as I say, had not come at first to Isabel, but it came to-day and made her feel almost happy. It was astonishing what happiness she could still find in the idea of procuring a pleasure for her husband. It was a pity, however, that Edward Rosier had crossed their path!

At this reflection the light that had suddenly gleamed upon that path lost something of its brightness. Isabel was unfortunately as sure that Pansy thought Mr. Rosier the nicest of all the young men—as sure as if she had held an interview with her on the subject. It was very tiresome that she should be so sure, when she had carefully abstained from informing herself; almost as tiresome as that poor Mr. Rosier should have taken it into his own head. He was certainly very inferior to Lord Warburton. It was not the difference in fortune so much as the difference in the men; the young American was really so very flimsy. He was much more of the type of the useless fine gentleman than the English nobleman. It was true that there was no particular reason why Pansy should marry a statesman; still, if a statesman admired her, that was his affair, and she would make a very picturesque little peeress.

It may seem to the reader that Isabel had suddenly grown strangely cynical; for she ended by saying to herself that this difficulty could probably be arranged. Somehow, an impediment that was embodied in poor Rosier could not present itself as a dangerous one; there were always means of levelling secondary obstacles. Isabel was perfectly aware that

she had not taken the measure of Pansy's tenacity, which might prove to be inconveniently great; but she inclined to think the young girl would not be tenacious, for she had the faculty of assent developed in a very much higher degree than that of resistance. She would cling, yes, she would cling; but it really mattered to her very little what she clung to. Lord Warburton would do as well as Mr. Rosier—especially as she seemed quite to like him. She had expressed this sentiment to Isabel without a single reservation; she said she thought his conversation most interesting—he had told her all about India. His manner to Pansy had been of the happiest; Isabel noticed that for herself, as she also observed that he talked to her not in the least in a patronising way, reminding himself of her youth and simplicity, but quite as if she could understand everything. He was careful only to be kind—he was as kind as he had been to Isabel herself at Gardencourt. A girl might well be touched by that; she remembered how she herself had been touched, and said to herself that if she had been as simple as Pansy, the impression would have been deeper still. She had not been simple when she refused him; that operation had been as complicated, as, later, her acceptance of Osmond. Pansy, however, in spite of *her* simplicity, really did understand, and was glad that Lord Warburton should talk to her, not about her partners and bouquets, but about the state of Italy, the condition of the peasantry, the famous grist-tax, the *pellagra*, his impressions of Roman society. She looked at him as she drew her needle through her tapestry, with sweet, attentive eyes, and when she lowered them she gave little quiet oblique

glances at his person, his hands, his feet, his clothes, as if she were considering him. Even his person, Isabel might have reminded her, was better than Mr. Rosier's. But Isabel contented herself at such moments with wondering where this gentleman was; he came no more at all to the Piazza Roccanera. It was surprising, as I say, the hold it had taken of her—the idea of assisting her husband to be pleased.

It was surprising for a variety of reasons, which I shall presently touch upon. On the evening I speak of, while Lord Warburton sat there, she had been on the point of taking the great step of going out of the room and leaving her companions alone. I say the great step, because it was in this light that Gilbert Osmond would have regarded it, and Isabel was trying as much as possible to take her husband's view. She succeeded after a fashion, but she did not succeed in coming to the point I mention. After all, she couldn't; something held her and made it impossible. It was not exactly that it would be base, insidious; for women as a general thing practise such manœuvres with a perfectly good conscience, and Isabel had all the qualities of her sex. It was a vague doubt that interposed—a sense that she was not quite sure. So she remained in the drawing-room, and after a while Lord Warburton went off to his party, of which he promised to give Pansy a full account on the morrow. After he had gone, Isabel asked herself whether she had prevented something which would have happened if she had absented herself for a quarter of an hour; and then she exclaimed—always mentally—that when Lord Warburton wished her to go away he would easily find means to let her know it. Pansy said no-

thing whatever about him after he had gone, and Isabel said nothing, as she had taken a vow of reserve until after he should have declared himself. He was a little longer in coming to this than might seem to accord with the description he had given Isabel of his feelings. Pansy went to bed, and Isabel had to admit that she could not now guess what her step-daughter was thinking of. Her transparent little companion was for the moment rather opaque.

Isabel remained alone, looking at the fire, until, at the end of half-an-hour, her husband came in. He moved about a while in silence, and then sat down, looking at the fire like herself. But Isabel now had transferred her eyes from the flickering flame in the chimney to Osmond's face, and she watched him while he sat silent. Covert observation had become a habit with her; an instinct, of which it is not an exaggeration to say that it was allied to that of self-defence, had made it habitual. She wished as much as possible to know his thoughts, to know what he would say, beforehand, so that she might prepare her answer. Preparing answers had not been her strong point of old; she had rarely in this respect got further than thinking afterwards of clever things she might have said. But she had learned caution—learned it in a measure from her husband's very countenance. It was the same face she had looked into with eyes equally earnest perhaps, but less penetrating, on the terrace of a Florentine villa; except that Osmond had grown a little stouter since his marriage. He still, however, looked very distinguished.

"Has Lord Warburton been here?" he presently asked.

"Yes, he stayed for half-an-hour."

"Did he see Pansy?"

"Yes; he sat on the sofa beside her."

"Did he talk with her much?"

"He talked almost only to her."

"It seems to me he's attentive. Isn't that what you call it?"

"I don't call it anything," said Isabel; "I have waited for you to give it a name."

"That's a consideration you don't always show," Osmond answered, after a moment.

"I have determined, this time, to try and act as you would like. I have so often failed in that."

Osmond turned his head, slowly, looking at her.

"Are you trying to quarrel with me?"

"No, I am trying to live at peace."

"Nothing is more easy; you know I don't quarrel myself."

"What do you call it when you try to make me angry?" Isabel asked.

"I don't try; if I have done so, it has been the most natural thing in the world. Moreover, I am not in the least trying now."

Isabel smiled. "It doesn't matter. I have determined never to be angry again."

"That's an excellent resolve. Your temper isn't good."

"No—it's not good." She pushed away the book she had been reading, and took up the band of tapestry that Pansy had left on the table.

"That's partly why I have not spoken to you about this business of my daughter's," Osmond said, designating Pansy in the manner that was most frequent

with him. "I was afraid I should encounter opposition—that you too would have views on the subject. I have sent little Rosier about his business."

"You were afraid that I would plead for Mr. Rosier? Haven't you noticed that I have never spoken to you of him?"

"I have never given you a chance. We have so little conversation in these days. I know he was an old friend of yours."

"Yes; he's an old friend of mine." Isabel cared little more for him than for the tapestry that she held in her hand; but it was true that he was an old friend, and with her husband she felt a desire not to extenuate such ties. He had a way of expressing contempt for them which fortified her loyalty to them, even when, as in the present case, they were in themselves insignificant. She sometimes felt a sort of passion of tenderness for memories which had no other merit than that they belonged to her unmarried life. "But as regards Pansy," she added in a moment, "I have given him no encouragement."

"That's fortunate," Osmond observed.

"Fortunate for me, I suppose you mean. For him it matters little."

"There is no use talking of him," Osmond said. "As I tell you, I have turned him out."

"Yes; but a lover outside is always a lover. He is sometimes even more of one. Mr. Rosier still has hope."

"He's welcome to the comfort of it! My daughter has only to sit still, to become Lady Warburton."

"Should you like that?" Isabel asked, with a simplicity which was not so affected as it may appear.

She was resolved to assume nothing, for Osmond had a way of unexpectedly turning her assumptions against her. The intensity with which he would like his daughter to become Lady Warburton had been the very basis of her own recent reflections. But that was for herself; she would recognise nothing until Osmond should have put it into words; she would not take for granted with him that he thought Lord Warburton a prize worth an amount of effort that was unusual among the Osmonds. It was Gilbert's constant intimation that, for him, nothing was a prize; that he treated as from equal to equal with the most distinguished people in the world, and that his daughter had only to look about her to pick out a prince. It cost him therefore a lapse from consistency to say explicitly that he yearned for Lord Warburton, that if this nobleman should escape, his equivalent might not be found; and it was another of his customary implications that he was never inconsistent. He would have liked his wife to glide over the point. But strangely enough, now that she was face to face with him, though an hour before she had almost invented a scheme for pleasing him, Isabel was not accommodating, would not glide. And yet she knew exactly the effect on his mind of her question: it would operate as a humiliation. Never mind; he was terribly capable of humiliating her—all the more so that he was also capable of waiting for great opportunities and of showing, sometimes, an almost unaccountable indifference to small ones. Isabel perhaps took a small opportunity because she would not have availed herself of a great one.

Osmond at present acquitted himself very honour-

ably. "I should like it extremely; it would be a great marriage. And then Lord Warburton has another advantage; he is an old friend of yours. It would be pleasant for him to come into the family. It is very singular that Pansy's admirers should all be your old friends."

"It is natural that they should come to see me. In coming to see me, they see Pansy. Seeing her, it is natural that they should fall in love with her."

"So I think. But you are not bound to do so."

"If she should marry Lord Warburton, I should be very glad," Isabel went on, frankly. "He's an excellent man. You say, however, that she has only to sit still. Perhaps she won't sit still; if she loses Mr. Rosier she may jump up!"

Osmond appeared to give no heed to this; he sat gazing at the fire. "Pansy would like to be a great lady," he remarked in a moment, with a certain tenderness of tone. "She wishes, above all, to please," he added.

"To please Mr. Rosier, perhaps."

"No, to please me."

"Me too a little, I think," said Isabel.

"Yes, she has a great opinion of you. But she will do what I like."

"If you are sure of that, it's very well," Isabel said.

"Meantime," said Osmond, "I should like our distinguished visitor to speak."

"He has spoken—to me. He has told me that it would be a great pleasure to him to believe she could care for him."

Osmond turned his head quickly; but at first he said nothing. Then—"Why didn't you tell me that?" he asked, quickly.

"There was no opportunity. You know how we live. I have taken the first chance that has offered."

"Did you speak to him of Rosier?"

"Oh yes, a little."

"That was hardly necessary."

"I thought it best he should know, so that, so that——" And Isabel paused.

"So that what?"

"So that he should act accordingly."

"So that he should back out, do you mean?"

"No, so that he should advance while there is yet time."

"That is not the effect it seems to have had."

"You should have patience," said Isabel. "You know Englishmen are shy."

"This one is not. He was not when he made love to you."

She had been afraid Osmond would speak of that; it was disagreeable to her. "I beg your pardon; he was extremely so," she said simply.

He answered nothing for some time; he took up a book and turned over the pages, while Isabel sat silent, occupying herself with Pansy's tapestry. "You must have a great deal of influence with him," Osmond went on at last. "The moment you really wish it, you can bring him to the point."

This was more disagreeable still; but Isabel felt it to be natural that her husband should say it, and it was after all something very much of the same sort that she had said to herself. "Why should I have

influence?" she asked. "What have I ever done to put him under an obligation to me?"

"You refused to marry him," said Osmond, with his eyes on his book.

"I must not presume too much on that," Isabel answered, gently.

He threw down the book presently, and got up, standing before the fire with his hands behind him. "Well," he said, "I hold that it lies in your hands. I shall leave it there. With a little good-will you may manage it. Think that over and remember that I count upon you."

He waited a little, to give her time to answer; but she answered nothing, and he presently strolled out of the room.

III.

SHE answered nothing, because his words had put the situation before her, and she was absorbed in looking at it. There was something in them that suddenly opened the door to agitation, so that she was afraid to trust herself to speak. After Osmond had gone, she leaned back in her chair and closed her eyes; and for a long time, far into the night, and still further, she sat in the silent drawing-room, given up to her meditation. A servant came in to attend to the fire, and she bade him bring fresh candles and then go to bed. Osmond had told her to think of what he had said; and she did so indeed, and of many other things. The suggestion, from another, that she had a peculiar influence on Lord Warburton, had given her the start that accompanies unexpected recognition. Was it true that there was something still between them that might be a handle to make him declare himself to Pansy—a susceptibility, on his part, to approval, a desire to do what would please her? Isabel had hitherto not asked herself the question, because she had not been forced; but now that it was directly presented to her, she saw the answer, and the answer frightened her. Yes, there was something—something on Lord Warburton's part. When he first came to Rome she believed that the link which united them had completely snapped; but little by little she

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had been reminded that it still had a palpable existence. It was as thin as a hair, but there were moments when she seemed to hear it vibrate. For herself, nothing was changed; what she once thought of Lord Warburton she still thought; it was needless that feeling should change; on the contrary, it seemed to her a better feeling than ever. But he? had he still the idea that she might be more to him than other women? Had he the wish to profit by the memory of the few moments of intimacy through which they had once passed? Isabel knew that she had read some of the signs of such a disposition. But what were his hopes, his pretensions, and in what strange way were they mingled with his evidently very sincere appreciation of poor Pansy? Was he in love with Gilbert Osmond's wife, and if so, what comfort did he expect to derive from it? If he was in love with Pansy, he was not in love with her stepmother; and if he was in love with her stepmother, he was not in love with Pansy. Was she to cultivate the advantage she possessed, in order to make him commit himself to Pansy, knowing that he would do so for her sake, and not for the young girl's—was this the service her husband had asked of her? This at any rate was the duty with which Isabel found herself confronted from the moment that she admitted to herself that Lord Warburton had still an uneradicated predilection for her society. It was not an agreeable task; it was, in fact, a repulsive one. She asked herself with dismay whether Lord Warburton were pretending to be in love with Pansy in order to cultivate another satisfaction. Of this refinement of duplicity she presently acquitted him; she preferred to believe

that he was in good faith. But if his admiration for Pansy was a delusion, this was scarcely better than its being an affectation. Isabel wandered among these ugly possibilities until she completely lost her way; some of them, as she suddenly encountered them, seemed ugly enough. Then she broke out of the labyrinth, rubbing her eyes, and declared that her imagination surely did her little honour, and that her husband's did him even less. Lord Warburton was as disinterested as he need be, and she was no more to him than she need wish. She would rest upon this until the contrary should be proved; proved more effectually than by a cynical intimation of Osmond's.

Such a resolution, however, brought her this evening but little peace, for her soul was haunted with terrors which crowded to the foreground of thought as quickly as a place was made for them. What had suddenly set them into livelier motion she hardly knew, unless it were the strange impression she had received in the afternoon of her husband and Madame Merle being in more direct communication than she suspected. This impression came back to her from time to time, and now she wondered that it had never come before. Besides this, her short interview with Osmond, half-an-hour before, was a striking example of his faculty for making everything wither that he touched, spoiling everything for her that he looked at. It was very well to undertake to give him a proof of loyalty; the real fact was that the knowledge of his expecting a thing raised a presumption against it. It was as if he had had the evil eye; as if his presence were a blight and his favour a misfortune. Was the fault in himself, or only in the deep mistrust she had

conceived for him? This mistrust was the clearest result of their short married life; a gulf had opened between them over which they looked at each other with eyes that were on either side a declaration of the deception suffered. It was a strange opposition, of the like of which she had never dreamed—an opposition in which the vital principle of the one was a thing of contempt to the other. It was not her fault—she had practised no deception; she had only admired and believed. She had taken all the first steps in the purest confidence, and then she had suddenly found the infinite vista of a multiplied life to be a dark, narrow alley, with a dead wall at the end. Instead of leading to the high places of happiness, from which the world would seem to lie below one, so that one could look down with a sense of exaltation and advantage, and judge and choose and pity, it led rather downward and earthward, into realms of restriction and depression, where the sound of other lives, easier and freer, was heard as from above, and served to deepen the feeling of failure. It was her deep distrust of her husband—this was what darkened the world. That is a sentiment easily indicated, but not so easily explained, and so composite in its character that much time and still more suffering had been needed to bring it to its actual perfection. Suffering, with Isabel, was an active condition; it was not a chill, a stupor, a despair; it was a passion of thought, of speculation, of response to every pressure. She flattered herself, however, that she had kept her failing faith to herself—that no one suspected it but Osmond. Oh, he knew it, and there were times when she thought that he enjoyed it. It had come gradually

—it was not till the first year of her marriage had closed that she took the alarm. Then the shadows began to gather; it was as if Osmond deliberately, almost malignantly, had put the lights out one by one. The dusk at first was vague and thin, and she could still see her way in it. But it steadily increased, and if here and there it had occasionally lifted, there were certain corners of her life that were impenetrably black. These shadows were not an emanation from her own mind; she was very sure of that; she had done her best to be just and temperate, to see only the truth. They were a part of her husband's very presence. They were not his misdeeds, his turpitudes; she accused him of nothing—that is, of but one thing, which was not a crime. She knew of no wrong that he had done; he was not violent, he was not cruel; she simply believed that he hated her. That was all she accused him of, and the miserable part of it was precisely that it was not a crime, for against a crime she might have found redress. He had discovered that she was so different, that she was not what he had believed she would prove to be. He had thought at first he could change her, and she had done her best to be what he would like. But she was, after all, herself—she couldn't help that; and now there was no use pretending, playing a part, for he knew her and he had made up his mind. She was not afraid of him; she had no apprehension that he would hurt her; for the ill-will he bore her was not of that sort. He would, if possible, never give her a pretext, never put himself in the wrong. Isabel, scanning the future with dry, fixed eyes, saw that he would have the better of her there. She would give him many

pretexts, she would often put herself in the wrong. There were times when she almost pitied him; for if she had not deceived him in intention she understood how completely she must have done so in fact. She had effaced herself, when he first knew her; she had made herself small, pretending there was less of her than there really was. It was because she had been under the extraordinary charm that he, on his side, had taken pains to put forth. He was not changed; he had not disguised himself, during the year of his courtship, any more than she. But she had seen only half his nature then, as one saw the disk of the moon when it was partly masked by the shadow of the earth. She saw the full moon now—she saw the whole man. She had kept still, as it were, so that he should have a free field, and yet in spite of this she had mistaken a part for the whole.

Ah, she had him immensely under the charm! It had not passed away; it was there still; she still knew perfectly what it was that made Osmond delightful when he chose to be. He had wished to be when he made love to her, and as she had wished to be charmed it was not wonderful that he succeeded. He succeeded because he was sincere; it never occurred to her to deny him that. He admired her—he had told her why; because she was the most imaginative woman he had known. It might very well have been true; for during those months she had imagined a world of things that had no substance. She had a vision of him—she had not read him right. A certain combination of features had touched her, and in them she had seen the most striking of portraits. That he was poor and lonely, and yet that somehow he was

noble—that was what interested her and seemed to give her her opportunity. There was an indefinable beauty about him—in his situation, in his mind, in his face. She had felt at the same time that he was helpless and ineffectual, but the feeling had taken the form of a tenderness which was the very flower of respect. He was like a sceptical voyager, strolling on the beach while he waited for the tide, looking seaward yet not putting to sea. It was in all this that she found her occasion. She would launch his boat for him; she would be his providence; it would be a good thing to love him. And she loved him—a good deal for what she found in him, but a good deal also for what she brought him. As she looked back at the passion of those weeks she perceived in it a kind of maternal strain—the happiness of a woman who felt that she was a contributor, that she came with full hands. But for her money, as she saw to-day, she wouldn't have done it. And then her mind wandered off to poor Mr. Touchett, sleeping under English turf, the beneficent author of infinite woe! For this was a fact. At bottom her money had been a burden, had been on her mind, which was filled with the desire to transfer the weight of it to some other conscience. What would lighten her own conscience more effectually than to make it over to the man who had the best taste in the world? Unless she should give it to a hospital, there was nothing better she could do with it; and there was no charitable institution in which she was as much interested as in Gilbert Osmond. He would use her fortune in a way that would make her think better of it, and rub off a certain grossness which attached to the good luck of an unexpected

inheritance. There had been nothing very delicate in inheriting seventy thousand pounds; the delicacy had been all in Mr. Touchett's leaving them to her. But to marry Gilbert Osmond and bring him such a portion—in that there would be delicacy for her as well. There would be less for him—that was true; but that was his affair, and if he loved her he would not object to her being rich. Had he not had the courage to say he was glad she was rich?

Isabel's cheek tingled when she asked herself if she had really married on a factitious theory, in order to do something finely appreciable with her money. But she was able to answer quickly enough that this was only half the story. It was because a certain feeling took possession of her—a sense of the earnestness of his affection and a delight in his personal qualities. He was better than any one else. This supreme conviction had filled her life for months, and enough of it still remained to prove to her that she could not have done otherwise. The finest individual she had ever known was hers; the simple knowledge was a sort of act of devotion. She had not been mistaken about the beauty of his mind; she knew that organ perfectly now. She had lived with it, she had lived in it almost—it appeared to have become her habitation. If she had been captured, it had taken a firm hand to do it; that reflection perhaps had some worth. A mind more ingenious, more subtle, more cultivated, more trained to admirable exercises, she had not encountered; and it was this exquisite instrument that she had now to reckon with. She lost herself in infinite dismay when she thought of the magnitude of *his* deception. It was a wonder, per-

haps, in view of this, that he didn't hate her more. She remembered perfectly the first sign he had given of it—it had been like the bell that was to ring up the curtain upon the real drama of their life. He said to her one day that she had too many ideas, and that she must get rid of them. He had told her that already, before their marriage; but then she had not noticed it; it came back to her only afterwards. This time she might well notice it, because he had really meant it. The words were nothing, superficially; but when in the light of deepening experience she looked into them, they appeared portentous. He really meant it—he would have liked her to have nothing of her own but her pretty appearance. She knew she had too many ideas; she had more even than he supposed, many more than she had expressed to him when he asked her to marry him. Yes, she *had* been hypocritical; she liked him so much. She had too many ideas for herself; but that was just what one married for, to share them with some one else. One couldn't pluck them up by the roots, though of course one might suppress them, be careful not to utter them. It was not that, however, his objecting to her opinions; that was nothing. She had no opinions—none that she would not have been eager to sacrifice in the satisfaction of feeling herself loved for it. What he meant was the whole thing—her character, the way she felt, the way she judged. This was what she had kept in reserve; this was what he had not known until he found himself—with the door closed behind, as it were—set down face to face with it. She had a certain way of looking at life which he took as a personal offence. Heaven knew that, now at least, it

was a very humble, accommodating way! The strange thing was that she should not have suspected from the first that his own was so different. She had thought it so large, so enlightened, so perfectly that of an honest man and a gentleman. Had not he assured her that he had no superstitions, no dull limitations, no prejudices that had lost their freshness? Hadn't he all the appearance of a man living in the open air of the world, indifferent to small considerations, caring only for truth and knowledge, and believing that two intelligent people ought to look for them together, and whether they found them or not, to find at least some happiness in the search? He had told her that he loved the conventional; but there was a sense in which this seemed a noble declaration. In that sense, the love of harmony, and order, and decency, and all the stately offices of life, she went with him freely, and his warning had contained nothing ominous. But when, as the months elapsed, she followed him further and he led her into the mansion of his own habitation, then, then she had seen where she really was. She could live it over again, the incredulous terror with which she had taken the measure of her dwelling. Between those four walls she had lived ever since; they were to surround her for the rest of her life. It was the house of darkness, the house of dumbness, the house of suffocation. Osmond's beautiful mind gave it neither light nor air; Osmond's beautiful mind, indeed, seemed to peep down from a small high window and mock at her. Of course it was not physical suffering; for physical suffering there might have been a remedy. She could come and go; she had her liberty; her husband was perfectly polite. He took

himself so seriously; it was something appalling. Under all his culture, his cleverness, his amenity, under his good-nature, his facility, his knowledge of life, his egotism lay hidden like a serpent in a bank of flowers. She had taken him seriously, but she had not taken him so seriously as that. How could she—especially when she knew him better? She was to think of him as he thought of himself—as the first gentleman in Europe. So it was that she had thought of him at first, and that indeed was the reason she had married him. But when she began to see what it implied, she drew back; there was more in the bond than she had meant to put her name to. It implied a sovereign contempt for every one but some three or four very exalted people whom he envied, and for everything in the world but half-a-dozen ideas of his own. That was very well; she would have gone with him even there, a long distance; for he pointed out to her so much of the baseness and shabbiness of life, opened her eyes so wide to the stupidity, the depravity, the ignorance of mankind, that she had been properly impressed with the infinite vulgarity of things, and of the virtue of keeping one's self unspotted by it. But this base, ignoble world, it appeared, was after all what one was to live for; one was to keep it for ever in one's eye, in order not to enlighten, or convert, or redeem it, but to extract from it some recognition of one's own superiority. On the one hand it was despicable, but on the other it afforded a standard. Osmond had talked to Isabel about his renunciation, his indifference, the ease with which he dispensed with the usual aids to success; and all this had seemed to her admirable. She had thought it a

noble indifference, an exquisite independence. But indifference was really the last of his qualities; she had never seen any one who thought so much of others. For herself, the world had always interested her, and the study of her fellow-creatures was her constant passion. She would have been willing, however, to renounce all her curiosities and sympathies for the sake of a personal life, if the person concerned had only been able to make her believe it was a gain! This, at least, was her present conviction; and the thing certainly would have been easier than to care for society as Osmond cared for it.

He was unable to live without it, and she saw that he had never really done so; he had looked at it out of his window even when he appeared to be most detached from it. He had his ideal, just as she had tried to have hers; only it was strange that people should seek for justice in such different quarters. His ideal was a conception of high prosperity and propriety, of the aristocratic life, which she now saw that Osmond deemed himself always, in essence at least, to have led. He had never lapsed from it for an hour; he would never have recovered from the shame of doing so. That again was very well; here too she would have agreed; but they attached such different ideas, such associations and desires, to the same formulas. Her notion of the aristocratic life was simply the union of great knowledge with great liberty; the knowledge would give one a sense of duty, and the liberty a sense of enjoyment. But for Osmond it was altogether a thing of forms, a conscious, calculated attitude. He was fond of the old, the consecrated, and transmitted; so was she, but she pretended to do what she chose

with it. He had an immense esteem for tradition; he had told her once that the best thing in the world was to have it, but that if one was so unfortunate as not to have it, one must immediately proceed to make it. She knew that he meant by this that she hadn't it, but that he was better off; though where he had got his traditions she never learned. He had a very large collection of them, however; that was very certain; after a little she began to see. The great thing was to act in accordance with them; the great thing not only for him but for her. Isabel had an undefined conviction that, to serve for another person than their proprietor, traditions must be of a thoroughly superior kind; but she nevertheless assented to this intimation that she too must march to the stately music that floated down from unknown periods in her husband's past; she who of old had been so free of step, so desultory, so devious, so much the reverse of processional. There were certain things they must do, a certain posture they must take, certain people they must know and not know. When Isabel saw this rigid system closing about her, draped though it was in pictured tapestries, that sense of darkness and suffocation of which I have spoken took possession of her; she seemed to be shut up with an odour of mould and decay. She had resisted, of course; at first very humorously, ironically, tenderly; then as the situation grew more serious, eagerly, passionately, pleadingly. She had pleaded the cause of freedom, of doing as they chose, of not caring for the aspect and denomination of their life—the cause of other instincts and longings, of quite another ideal. Then it was that her husband's personality, touched as it never had

been, stepped forth and stood erect. The things that she had said were answered only by his scorn, and she could see that he was ineffably ashamed of her. What did he think of her—that she was base, vulgar, ignoble? He at least knew now that she had no traditions! It had not been in his provision of things that she should reveal such flatness; her sentiments were worthy of a radical newspaper or of a Unitarian preacher. The real offence, as she ultimately perceived, was her having a mind of her own at all. Her mind was to be his—attached to his own like a small garden-plot to a deer-park. He would rake the soil gently and water the flowers; he would weed the beds and gather an occasional nosegay. It would be a pretty piece of property for a proprietor already far-reaching. He didn't wish her to be stupid. On the contrary, it was because she was clever that she had pleased him. But he expected her intelligence to operate altogether in his favour, and so far from desiring her mind to be a blank, he had flattered himself that it would be richly receptive. He had expected his wife to feel with him and for him, to enter into his opinions, his ambitions, his preferences; and Isabel was obliged to confess that this was no very unwarrantable demand on the part of a husband. But there were certain things she could never take in. To begin with, they were hideously unclean. She was not a daughter of the Puritans, but for all that she believed in such a thing as purity. It would appear that Osmond didn't; some of his traditions made her push back her skirts. Did all women have lovers? Did they all lie, and even the best have their price? Were there only three or four that didn't deceive

their husbands? When Isabel heard such things she felt a greater scorn for them than for the gossip of a village-parlour—a scorn that kept its freshness in a very tainted air. There was the taint of her sister-in-law; did her husband judge only by the Countess Gemini? This lady very often lied, and she had practised deceptions which were not simply verbal. It was enough to find these facts assumed among Osmond's traditions, without giving them such a general extension. It was her scorn of his assumptions—it was that that made him draw himself up. He had plenty of contempt, and it was proper that his wife should be as well furnished; but that she should turn the hot light of her disdain upon his own conception of things—this was a danger he had not allowed for. He believed he should have regulated her emotions before she came to that; and Isabel could easily imagine how his ears scorched when he discovered that he had been too confident. When one had a wife who gave one that sensation there was nothing left but to hate her!

She was morally certain now that this feeling of hatred, which at first had been a refuge and a refreshment, had become the occupation and comfort of Osmond's life. The feeling was deep, because it was sincere; he had had a revelation that, after all, she could dispense with him. If to herself the idea was startling, if it presented itself at first as a kind of infidelity, a capacity for pollution, what infinite effect might it not be expected to have had upon him? It was very simple; he despised her; she had no traditions, and the moral horizon of a Unitarian minister. Poor Isabel, who had never been able to understand

Unitarianism! This was the conviction that she had been living with now for a time that she had ceased to measure. What was coming—what was before them? That was her constant question. What would he do—what ought she to do? When a man hated his wife, what did it lead to? She didn't hate him, that she was sure of, for every little while she felt a passionate wish to give him a pleasant surprise. Very often, however, she felt afraid, and it used to come over her, as I have intimated, that she had deceived him at the very first. They were strangely married, at all events, and it was an awful life. Until that morning he had scarcely spoken to her for a week; his manner was as dry as a burned-out fire. She knew there was a special reason; he was displeased at Ralph Touchett's staying on in Rome. He thought she saw too much of her cousin—he had told her a week before that it was indecent she should go to him at his hotel. He would have said more than this if Ralph's invalid state had not appeared to make it brutal to denounce him; but having to contain himself only deepened Osmond's disgust. Isabel read all this as she would have read the hour on the clock-face; she was as perfectly aware that the sight of her interest in her cousin stirred her husband's rage, as if Osmond had locked her into her bedroom—which she was sure he wanted to do. It was her honest belief that on the whole she was not defiant; but she certainly could not pretend to be indifferent to Ralph. She believed he was dying, at last, and that she should never see him again, and this gave her a tenderness for him that she had never known before. Nothing was a pleasure to her now; how could any-

thing be a pleasure to a woman who knew that she had thrown away her life? There was an everlasting weight upon her heart—there was a livid light upon everything. But Ralph's little visit was a lamp in the darkness; for the hour that she sat with him her spirit rose. She felt to-day as if he had been her brother. She had never had a brother, but if she had, and she were in trouble, and he were dying, he would be dear to her as Ralph was. Ah yes, if Gilbert was jealous of her there was perhaps some reason; it didn't make Gilbert look better to sit for half-an-hour with Ralph. It was not that they talked of him—it was not that she complained. His name was never uttered between them. It was simply that Ralph was generous and that her husband was not. There was something in Ralph's talk, in his smile, in the mere fact of his being in Rome, that made the blasted circle round which she walked more spacious. He made her feel the good of the world; he made her feel what might have been. He was, after all, as intelligent as Osmond—quite apart from his being better. And thus it seemed to her an act of devotion to conceal her misery from him. She concealed it elaborately; in their talk she was perpetually hanging out curtains and arranging screens. It lived before her again—it had never had time to die—that morning in the garden at Florence, when he warned her against Osmond. She had only to close her eyes to see the place, to hear his voice, to feel the warm, sweet air. How could he have known? What a mystery! what a wonder of wisdom! As intelligent as Gilbert? He was much more intelligent, to arrive at such a judgment as that. Gilbert had never been so

deep, so just. She had told him then that from her at least he should never know if he was right; and this was what she was taking care of now. It gave her plenty to do; there was passion, exaltation, religion in it. Women find their religion sometimes in strange exercises, and Isabel, at present, in playing a part before her cousin, had an idea that she was doing him a kindness. It would have been a kindness, perhaps, if he had been for a single instant a dupe. As it was, the kindness consisted mainly in trying to make him believe that he had once wounded her greatly and that the event had put him to shame, but that as she was very generous and he was so ill, she bore him no grudge and even considerately forbore to flaunt her happiness in his face. Ralph smiled to himself, as he lay on his sofa, at this extraordinary form of consideration; but he forgave her for having forgiven him. She didn't wish him to have the pain of knowing she was unhappy; that was the great thing, and it didn't matter that such knowledge would rather have righted him.

For herself, she lingered in the soundless drawing-room long after the fire had gone out. There was no danger of her feeling the cold; she was in a fever. She heard the small hours strike, and then the great ones, but her vigil took no heed of time. Her mind, assailed by visions, was in a state of extraordinary activity, and her visions might as well come to her there, where she sat up to meet them, as on her pillow, to make a mockery of rest. As I have said, she believed she was not defiant, and what could be a better proof of it than that she should linger there half the night, trying to persuade herself that there

was no reason why Pansy shouldn't be married as you would put a letter in the post-office? When the clock struck four she got up; she was going to bed at last, for the lamp had long since gone out and the candles had burned down to their sockets. But even then she stopped again in the middle of the room, and stood there gazing at a remembered vision—that of her husband and Madame Merle, grouped unconsciously and familiarly.

IV.

THREE nights after this she took Pansy to a great party, to which Osmond, who never went to dances, did not accompany them. Pansy was as ready for a dance as ever; she was not of a generalising turn, and she had not extended to other pleasures the interdict that she had seen placed on those of love. If she was biding her time or hoping to circumvent her father, she must have had a prevision of success. Isabel thought that this was not likely; it was much more likely that Pansy had simply determined to be a good girl. She had never had such a chance, and she had a proper esteem for chances. She carried herself no less attentively than usual, and kept no less anxious an eye upon her vaporous skirts; she held her bouquet very tight, and counted over the flowers for the twentieth time. She made Isabel feel old; it seemed so long since she had been in a flutter about a ball. Pansy, who was greatly admired, was never in want of partners, and very soon after their arrival she gave Isabel, who was not dancing, her bouquet to hold. Isabel had rendered this service for some minutes when she became aware that Edward Rosier was standing before her. He had lost his affable smile, and wore a look of almost military resolution; the change in his appearance would have made Isabel smile if she had not felt that at bottom his case was

a hard one; he had always smelt so much more of heliotrope than of gunpowder. He looked at her a moment somewhat fiercely, as if to notify her that he was dangerous, and then he dropped his eyes on her bouquet. After he had inspected it his glance softened, and he said quickly,

"It's all pansies; it must be hers!"

Isabel smiled kindly.

"Yes, it's hers; she gave it to me to hold."

"May I hold it a little, Mrs. Osmond?" the poor young man asked.

"No, I can't trust you; I am afraid you wouldn't give it back."

"I am not sure that I should; I should leave the house with it instantly. But may I not at least have a single flower?"

Isabel hesitated a moment, and then, smiling still, held out the bouquet.

"Choose one yourself. It's frightful what I am doing for you."

"Ah, if you do no more than this, Mrs. Osmond!" Rosier exclaimed, with his glass in one eye, carefully choosing his flower.

"Don't put it into your button-hole," she said. "Don't for the world!"

"I should like her to see it. She has refused to dance with me, but I wish to show her that I believe in her still."

"It's very well to show it to her, but it's out of place to show it to others. Her father has told her not to dance with you."

"And is that all *you* can do for me? I expected more from you, Mrs. Osmond," said the young man,

in a tone of fine general reference. "You know that our acquaintance goes back very far—quite into the days of our innocent childhood."

"Don't make me out too old," Isabel answered, smiling. "You come back to that very often, and I have never denied it. But I must tell you that, old friends as we are, if you had done me the honour to ask me to marry you I should have refused you."

"Ah, you don't esteem me, then. Say at once that you think I'm a trifler!"

"I esteem you very much, but I'm not in love with you. What I mean by that, of course, is that I am not in love with you for Pansy."

"Very good; I see; you pity me, that's all."

And Edward Rosier looked all round, inconsequently, with his single glass. It was a revelation to him that people shouldn't be more pleased; but he was at least too proud to show that the movement struck him as general.

Isabel for a moment said nothing. His manner and appearance had not the dignity of the deepest tragedy; his little glass among other things, was against that. But she suddenly felt touched; her own unhappiness, after all, had something in common with his, and it came over her, more than before, that here, in recognisable, if not in romantic form, was the most affecting thing in the world—young love struggling with adversity.

"Would you really be very kind to her?" she said, in a low tone.

He dropped his eyes, devoutly, and raised the little flower which he held in his fingers to his lips,

Then he looked at her. "You pity me; but don't you pity her a little?"

"I don't know; I am not sure. She will always enjoy life."

"It will depend on what you call life!" Rosier exclaimed. "She won't enjoy being tortured."

"There will be nothing of that."

"I am glad to hear it. She knows what she is about. You will see."

"I think she does, and she will never disobey her father. But she is coming back to me," Isabel added, "and I must beg you to go away."

Rosier lingered a moment, till Pansy came in sight, on the arm of her cavalier; he stood just long enough to look her in the face. Then he walked away, holding up his head; and the manner in which he achieved this sacrifice to expediency convinced Isabel that he was very much in love.

Pansy, who seldom got disarranged in dancing, and looked perfectly fresh and cool after this exercise, waited a moment and then took back her bouquet. Isabel watched her and saw that she was counting the flowers; whereupon she said to herself that, decidedly, there were deeper forces at play than she had recognised. Pansy had seen Rosier turn away, but she said nothing to Isabel about him; she talked only of her partner, after he had made his bow and retired; of the music, the floor, the rare misfortune of having already torn her dress. Isabel was sure, however, that she perceived that her lover had abstracted a flower; though this knowledge was not needed to account for the dutiful grace with which she responded to the appeal of her next partner. That perfect

amenity under acute constraint was part of a larger system. She was again led forth by a flushed young man, this time carrying her bouquet; and she had not been absent many minutes when Isabel saw Lord Warburton advancing through the crowd. He presently drew near and bade her good evening; she had not seen him since the day before. He looked about him, and then—"Where is the little maid?" he asked. It was in this manner that he formed the harmless habit of alluding to Miss Osmond.

"She is dancing," said Isabel; "you will see her somewhere."

He looked among the dancers, and at last caught Pansy's eye. "She sees me, but she won't notice me," he then remarked. "Are you not dancing?"

"As you see, I'm a wall-flower."

"Won't you dance with me?"

"Thank you; I would rather you should dance with my little maid."

"One needn't prevent the other; especially as she is engaged."

"She is not engaged for everything, and you can reserve yourself. She dances very hard, and you will be the fresher."

"She dances beautifully," said Lord Warburton, following her with his eyes. "Ah, at last," he added, "she has given me a smile." He stood there with his handsome, easy, important physiognomy; and as Isabel observed him it came over her, as it had done before, that it was strange a man of his importance should take an interest in a little maid. It struck her as a great incongruity; neither Pansy's small fascinations, nor his own kindness, his good-nature, not even his

need for amusement, which was extreme and constant, were sufficient to account for it. "I shall like to dance with you," he went on in a moment, turning back to Isabel; "but I think I like even better to talk with you."

"Yes, it's better, and it's more worthy of your dignity. Great statesmen oughtn't to waltz."

"Don't be cruel. Why did you recommend me then to dance with Miss Osmond?"

"Ah, that's different. If you dance with her, it would look simply like a piece of kindness—as if you were doing it for her amusement. If you dance with me you will look as if you were doing it for your own."

"And pray haven't I a right to amuse myself?"

"No, not with the affairs of the British Empire on your hands."

"The British Empire be hanged! You are always laughing at it."

"Amuse yourself with talking to me," said Isabel.

"I am not sure that is a recreation. You are too pointed; I have always to be defending myself. And you strike me as more than usually dangerous to-night. Won't you really dance?"

"I can't leave my place. Pansy must find me here."

He was silent a moment. "You are wonderfully good to her," he said, suddenly.

Isabel stared a little, and smiled. "Can you imagine one's not being?"

"No, indeed. I know how one cares for her. But you must have done a great deal for her."

"I have taken her out with me," said Isabel,

smiling still. "And I have seen that she has proper clothes."

"Your society must have been a great benefit to her. You have talked to her, advised her, helped her to develop."

"Ah, yes, if she isn't the rose, she has lived near it."

Isabel laughed, and her companion smiled; but there was a certain visible preoccupation in his face which interfered with complete hilarity. "We all try to live as near it as we can," he said, after a moment's hesitation.

Isabel turned away; Pansy was about to be restored to her, and she welcomed the diversion. We know how much she liked Lord Warburton; she thought him delightful; there was something in his friendship which appeared a kind of resource in case of indefinite need; it was like having a large balance at the bank. She felt happier when he was in the room; there was something reassuring in his approach; the sound of his voice reminded her of the beneficence of nature. Yet for all that it did not please her that he should be too near to her, that he should take too much of her good-will for granted. She was afraid of that; she averted herself from it; she wished he wouldn't. She felt that if he should come too near, as it were, it was in her to flash out and bid him keep his distance. Pansy came back to Isabel with another rent in her skirt, which was the inevitable consequence of the first, and which she displayed to Isabel with serious eyes. There were too many gentlemen in uniform; they wore those dreadful spurs, which were fatal to the dresses of young girls. It

hereupon became apparent that the resources of women are innumerable. Isabel devoted herself to Pansy's desecrated drapery; she fumbled for a pin and repaired the injury; she smiled and listened to her account of her adventures. Her attention, her sympathy, were most active; and they were in direct proportion to a sentiment with which they were in no way connected—a lively conjecture as to whether Lord Warburton was trying to make love to her. It was not simply his words just then; it was others as well; it was the reference and the continuity. This was what she thought about while she pinned up Pansy's dress. If it were so, as she feared, he was of course unconscious; he himself had not taken account of his intention. But this made it none the more auspicious, made the situation none the less unacceptable. The sooner Lord Warburton should come to self-consciousness the better. He immediately began to talk to Pansy—on whom it was certainly mystifying to see that he dropped a smile of chastened devotion. Pansy replied as usual, with a little air of conscientious aspiration; he had to bend toward her a good deal in conversation, and her eyes, as usual, wandered up and down his robust person, as if he had offered it to her for exhibition. She always seemed a little frightened; yet her fright was not of the painful character that suggests dislike; on the contrary, she looked as if she knew that he knew that she liked him. Isabel left them together a little, and wandered toward a friend whom she saw near, and with whom she talked till the music of the following dance began, for which she knew that Pansy was also engaged. The young girl joined her presently, with a little

fluttered look, and Isabel, who scrupulously took Osmond's view of his daughter's complete dependence, consigned her, as a precious and momentary loan, to her appointed partner. About all this matter she had her own imaginations, her own reserves; there were moments when Pansy's extreme adhesiveness made each of them, to her sense, look foolish. But Osmond had given her a sort of tableau of her position as his daughter's duenna, which consisted of gracious alternation of concession and contraction; and there were directions of his which she liked to think that she obeyed to the letter. Perhaps, as regards some of them, it was because her doing so appeared to reduce them to the absurd.

After Pansy had been led away, Isabel found Lord Warburton drawing near her again. She rested her eyes on him, steadily; she wished she could sound his thoughts. But he had no appearance of confusion.

"She has promised to dance with me later," he said.

"I am glad of that. I suppose you have engaged her for the cotillion."

At this he looked a little awkward. "No, I didn't ask her for that. It's a quadrille."

"Ah, you are not clever!" said Isabel, almost angrily. "I told her to keep the cotillion, in case you should ask for it."

"Poor little maid, fancy that!" And Lord Warburton laughed frankly. "Of course I will if you like."

"If I like? Oh, if you dance with her only because I like it!"

"I am afraid I bore her. She seems to have a lot of young fellows on her book."

Isabel dropped her eyes, reflecting rapidly; Lord Warburton stood there looking at her and she felt his eyes on her face. She felt much inclined to ask him to remove them. She did not do so, however; she only said to him, after a minute, looking up—"Please to let me understand."

"Understand what?"

"You told me ten days ago that you should like to marry my step-daughter. You have not forgotten it!"

"Forgotten it? I wrote to Mr. Osmond about it this morning."

"Ah," said Isabel, "he didn't mention to me that he had heard from you."

Lord Warburton stammered a little. "I—I didn't send my letter."

"Perhaps you forgot that."

"No, I wasn't satisfied with it. It's an awkward sort of letter to write, you know. But I shall send it to-night."

"At three o'clock in the morning?"

"I mean later, in the course of the day."

"Very good. You still wish, then, to marry her?"

"Very much indeed."

"Aren't you afraid that you will bore her?" And as her companion stared at this inquiry, Isabel added—"If she can't dance with you for half-an-hour, how will she be able to dance with you for life?"

"Ah," said Lord Warburton, readily, "I will let her dance with other people! About the cotillion, the fact is I thought that you—that you—"

"That I would dance with you? I told you I would dance nothing."

"Exactly; so that while it is going on I might find some quiet corner where we might sit down and talk."

"Oh," said Isabel gravely, "you are much too considerate of me."

When the cotillion came, Pansy was found to have engaged herself, thinking, in perfect humility, that Lord Warburton had no intentions. Isabel recommended him to seek another partner, but he assured her that he would dance with no one but herself. As, however, she had, in spite of the remonstrances of her hostess, declined other invitations on the ground that she was not dancing at all, it was not possible for her to make an exception in Lord Warburton's favour.

"After all, I don't care to dance," he said, "it's a barbarous amusement; I would much rather talk." And he intimated that he had discovered exactly the corner he had been looking for—a quiet nook in one of the smaller rooms, where the music would come to them faintly and not interfere with conversation. Isabel had decided to let him carry out his idea; she wished to be satisfied. She wandered away from the ball-room with him, though she knew that her husband desired she should not lose sight of his daughter. It was with his daughter's *prétendant*, however; that would make it right for Osmond. On her way out of the ball-room she came upon Edward Rosier, who was standing in a doorway, with folded arms, looking at the dance, in the attitude of a young man without illusions. She stopped a moment and asked him if he were not dancing.

"Certainly not, if I can't dance with her!" he answered.

"You had better go away, then," said Isabel, with the manner of good counsel.

"I shall not go till she does!" And he let Lord Warburton pass, without giving him a look.

This nobleman, however, had noticed the melancholy youth, and he asked Isabel who her dismal friend was, remarking that he had seen him somewhere before.

"It's the young man I have told you about, who is in love with Pansy," said Isabel.

"Ah yes, I remember. He looks rather bad."

"He has reason. My husband won't listen to him."

"What's the matter with him?" Lord Warburton inquired. "He seems very harmless."

"He hasn't money enough, and he isn't very clever."

Lord Warburton listened with interest; he seemed struck with this account of Edward Rosier. "Dear me; he looked a well-set-up young fellow."

"So he is, but my husband is very particular."

"Oh, I see." And Lord Warburton paused a moment. "How much money has he got?" he then ventured to ask.

"Some forty thousand francs a year."

"Sixteen hundred pounds? Ah, but that's very good, you know."

"So I think. But my husband has larger ideas."

"Yes; I have noticed that your husband has very large ideas. Is he really an idiot, the young man?"

"An idiot? Not in the least; he's charming. When

he was twelve years old I myself was in love with him."

"He doesn't look much more than twelve to-day," Lord Warburton rejoined, vaguely, looking about him. Then, with more point—"Don't you think we might sit here?" he asked.

"Wherever you please." The room was a sort of boudoir, pervaded by a subdued, rose-coloured light; a lady and gentleman moved out of it as our friends came in. "It's very kind of you to take such an interest in Mr. Rosier," Isabel said.

"He seems to me rather ill-treated. He had a face a yard long; I wondered what ailed him."

"You are a just man," said Isabel. "You have a kind thought even for a rival."

Lord Warburton turned, suddenly, with a stare. "A rival! Do you call him my rival?"

"Surely—if you both wish to marry the same person."

"Yes—but since he has no chance!"

"All the same, I like you for putting yourself in his place. It shows imagination."

"You like me for it?" And Lord Warburton looked at her with an uncertain eye. "I think you mean that you are laughing at me for it."

"Yes, I am laughing at you, a little. But I like you, too."

"Ah well, then, let me enter into his situation a little more. What do you suppose one could do for him?"

"Since I have been praising your imagination, I will leave you to imagine that yourself," Isabel said. "Pansy, too, would like you for that."

"Miss Osmond? Ah, she, I flatter myself, likes me already."

"Very much, I think."

He hesitated a little; he was still questioning her face. "Well, then, I don't understand you. You don't mean that she cares for him?"

"Surely, I have told you that I thought she did."

A sudden blush sprung to his face. "You told me that she would have no wish apart from her father's, and as I have gathered that he would favour me—" He paused a little, and then he added—"Don't you see?" suggestively, through his blush.

"Yes, I told you that she had an immense wish to please her father, and that it would probably take her very far."

"That seems to me a very proper feeling," said Lord Warburton.

"Certainly; it's a very proper feeling." Isabel remained silent for some moments; the room continued to be empty; the sound of the music reached them with its richness softened by the interposing apartments. Then at last she said—"But it hardly strikes me as the sort of feeling to which a man would wish to be indebted for a wife."

"I don't know; if the wife is a good one, and he thinks she does well!"

"Yes, of course you must think that."

"I do; I can't help it. You call that very British, of course."

"No, I don't. I think Pansy would do wonderfully well to marry you, and I don't know who should know it better than you. But you are not in love."

"Ah, yes I am, Mrs. Osmond!"

Isabel shook her head. "You like to think you are, while you sit here with me. But that's not how you strike me."

"I'm not like the young man in the doorway. I admit that. But what makes it so unnatural? Could anything in the world be more charming than Miss Osmond?"

"Nothing, possibly. But love has nothing to do with good reasons."

"I don't agree with you. I am delighted to have good reasons."

"Of course you are. If you were really in love you wouldn't care a straw for them."

"Ah, really in love—really in love!" Lord Warburton exclaimed, folding his arms, leaning back his head, and stretching himself a little. "You must remember that I am forty years old. I won't pretend that I am as I once was."

"Well, if you are sure," said Isabel, "it's all right."

He answered nothing; he sat there, with his head back, looking before him. Abruptly, however, he changed his position; he turned quickly to his companion. "Why are you so unwilling, so sceptical?"

She met his eye, and for a moment they looked straight at each other. If she wished to be satisfied, she saw something that satisfied her; she saw in his eye the gleam of an idea that she was uneasy on her own account—that she was perhaps even frightened. It expressed a suspicion, not a hope, but such as it was it told her what she wished to know. Not for an instant should he suspect that she detected in his wish to marry her step-daughter an implication of in-

creased nearness to herself, or that if she did detect it she thought it alarming or compromising. In that brief, extremely personal gaze, however, deeper meanings passed between them than they were conscious of at the moment.

"My dear Lord Warburton," she said, smiling, "you may do, as far as I am concerned, whatever comes into your head."

And with this she got up, and wandered into the adjoining room, where she encountered several acquaintances. While she talked with them she found herself regretting that she had moved; it looked a little like running away—all the more as Lord Warburton didn't follow her. She was glad of this, however, and, at any rate, she was satisfied. She was so well satisfied that when, in passing back into the ball-room, she found Edward Rosier still planted in the doorway, she stopped and spoke to him again.

"You did right not to go away. I have got some comfort for you."

"I need it," the young man murmured, "when I see you so awfully thick with *him*!"

"Don't speak of him, I will do what I can for you. I am afraid it won't be much, but what I can I will do."

He looked at her with gloomy obliqueness. "What has suddenly brought you round?"

"The sense that you are an inconvenience in the doorways!" she answered, smiling, as she passed him. Half-an-hour later she took leave, with Pansy, and at the foot of the staircase the two ladies, with many other departing guests, waited a while for their carriage. Just as it approached, Lord Warburton came

out of the house, and assisted them to reach their vehicle. He stood a moment at the door, asking Pansy if she had amused herself; and she, having answered him, fell back with a little air of fatigue. Then Isabel, at the window, detaining him by a movement of her finger, murmured gently—"Don't forget to send your letter to her father!"

V.

THE Countess Gemini was often extremely bored—bored, in her own phrase, to extinction. She had not been extinguished, however, and she struggled bravely enough with her destiny, which had been to marry an unaccommodating Florentine who insisted upon living in his native town, where he enjoyed such consideration as might attach to a gentleman whose talent for losing at cards had not the merit of being incidental to an obliging disposition. The Count Gemini was not liked even by those who won from him; and he bore a name which, having a measurable value in Florence, was, like the local coin of the old Italian states, without currency in other parts of the peninsula. In Rome he was simply a very dull Florentine, and it is not remarkable that he should not have cared to pay frequent visits to a city where, to carry it off, his dulness needed more explanation than was convenient. The Countess lived with her eyes upon Rome, and it was the constant grievance of her life that she had not a habitation there. She was ashamed to say how seldom she had been al-

lowed to go there; it scarcely made the matter better that there were other members of the Florentine nobility who never had been there at all. She went whenever she could; that was all she could say. Or rather, not all; but all she said she could say. In fact, she had much more to say about it, and had often set forth the reasons why she hated Florence and wished to end her days in the shadow of St. Peter's. They are reasons, however, which do not closely concern us, and were usually summed up in the declaration that Rome, in short, was the Eternal City, and that Florence was simply a pretty little place like any other. The Countess apparently needed to connect the idea of eternity with her amusements. She was convinced that society was infinitely more interesting in Rome, where you met celebrities all winter at evening parties. At Florence there were no celebrities; none at least one had heard of. Since her brother's marriage her impatience had greatly increased; she was so sure that his wife had a more brilliant life than herself. She was not so intellectual as Isabel, but she was intellectual enough to do justice to Rome—not to the ruins and the catacombs, not even perhaps to the church-ceremonies and the scenery; but certainly to all the rest. She heard a great deal about her sister-in-law, and knew perfectly that Isabel was having a beautiful time. She had indeed seen it for herself on the only occasion on which she had enjoyed the hospitality of the Palazzo Roccanera. She had spent a week there during the first winter of her brother's marriage; but she had not been encouraged to renew this satisfaction. Osmond didn't want her—that she was perfectly aware of; but she would

have gone all the same, for after all she didn't care two straws about Osmond. But her husband wouldn't let her, and the money-question was always a trouble. Isabel had been very nice; the Countess, who had liked her sister-in-law from the first, had not been blinded by envy to Isabel's personal merits. She had always observed that she got on better with clever women than with silly ones, like herself; the silly ones could never understand her wisdom, whereas the clever ones—the really clever ones—always understood her silliness. It appeared to her that, different as they were in appearance and general style, Isabel and she had a patch of common ground somewhere, which they would set their feet upon at last. It was not very large, but it was firm, and they would both know it when once they touched it. And then she lived, with Mrs. Osmond, under the influence of a pleasant surprise; she was constantly expecting that Isabel would "look down" upon her, and she as constantly saw this operation postponed. She asked herself when it would begin; not that she cared much; but she wondered what kept it in abeyance. Her sister-in-law regarded her with none but level glances, and expressed for the poor Countess as little contempt as admiration. In reality, Isabel would as soon have thought of despising her as of passing a moral judgment on a grasshopper. She was not indifferent to her husband's sister, however; she was rather a little afraid of her. She wondered at her; she thought her very extraordinary. The Countess seemed to her to have no soul; she was like a bright shell, with a polished surface, in which something would rattle when you shook it. This rattle was apparently the

Countess's spiritual principle; a little loose nut that tumbled about inside of her. She was too odd for disdain, too anomalous for comparisons. Isabel would have invited her again (there was no question of inviting the Count); but Osmond, after his marriage, had not scrupled to say frankly that Amy was a fool of the worst species—a fool whose folly had the irrepressibility of genius. He said at another time that she had no heart; and he added in a moment that she had given it all away—in small pieces, like a wedding-cake. The fact of not having been asked was of course another obstacle to the Countess's going again to Rome; but at the period with which this history has now to deal, she was in receipt of an invitation to spend several weeks at the Palazzo Roccamana. The proposal had come from Osmond himself, who wrote to his sister that she must be prepared to be very quiet. Whether or no she found in this phrase all the meaning he had put into it, I am unable to say; but she accepted the invitation on any terms. She was curious, moreover; for one of the impressions of her former visit had been that her brother had found his match. Before the marriage she had been sorry for Isabel, so sorry as to have had serious thoughts—if any of the Countess's thoughts were serious—of putting her on her guard. But she had let that pass, and after a little she was reassured. Osmond was as lofty as ever, but his wife would not be an easy victim. The Countess was not very exact at measurements; but it seemed to her that if Isabel should draw herself up she would be the taller spirit of the two. What she wanted to learn now was whether Isabel had drawn herself up; it

would give her immense pleasure to see Osmond overtopped.

Several days before she was to start for Rome a servant brought her the card of a visitor—a card with the simple superscription, “Henrietta C. Stackpole.” The Countess pressed her finger-tips to her forehead; she did not remember to have known any such Henrietta as that. The servant then remarked that the lady had requested him to say that if the Countess should not recognise her name, she would know her well enough on seeing her. By the time she appeared before her visitor she had in fact reminded herself that there was once a literary lady at Mrs. Touchett’s; the only woman of letters she had ever encountered. That is, the only modern one, since she was the daughter of a defunct poetess. She recognised Miss Stackpole immediately; the more so that Miss Stackpole seemed perfectly unchanged; and the Countess, who was thoroughly good-natured, thought it rather fine to be called on by a person of that sort of distinction. She wondered whether Miss Stackpole had come on account of her mother—whether she had heard of the American Corinne. Her mother was not at all like Isabel’s friend; the Countess could see at a glance that this lady was much more modern; and she received an impression of the improvements that were taking place—chiefly in distant countries—in the character (the professional character) of literary ladies. Her mother used to wear a Roman scarf thrown over a pair of bare shoulders, and a gold laurel-wreath set upon a multitude of glossy ringlets. She spoke softly and vaguely, with a kind of Southern accent; she sighed a great deal, and was not at all enterprising.

But Henrietta, the Countess could see, was always closely buttoned and compactly braided; there was something brisk and business-like in her appearance, and her manner was almost conscientiously familiar. The Countess could not but feel that the correspondent of the *Interviewer* was much more efficient than the American Corinne.

Henrietta explained that she had come to see the Countess because she was the only person she knew in Florence, and that when she visited a foreign city she liked to see something more than superficial travellers. She knew Mrs. Touchett, but Mrs. Touchett was in America, and even if she had been in Florence Henrietta would not have gone to see her, for Mrs. Touchett was not one of her admirations.

"Do you mean by that that I am?" the Countess asked, smiling graciously.

"Well, I like you better than I do her," said Miss Stackpole. "I seem to remember that when I saw you before you were very interesting. I don't know whether it was an accident, or whether it is your usual style. At any rate, I was a good deal struck with what you said. I made use of it afterwards in print."

"Dear me!" cried the Countess, staring and half-alarmed; "I had no idea I ever said anything remarkable! I wish I had known it."

"It was about the position of woman in this city," Miss Stackpole remarked. "You threw a good deal of light upon it."

"The position of woman is very uncomfortable. Is that what you mean? And you wrote it down and

published it?" the Countess went on. "Ah, do let me see it!"

"I will write to them to send you the paper if you like," Henrietta said. "I didn't mention your name; I only said a lady of high rank. And then I quoted your views."

The Countess threw herself hastily backward, tossing up her clasped hands.

"Do you know I am rather sorry you didn't mention my name? I should have rather liked to see my name in the papers. I forget what my views were; I have so many! But I am not ashamed of them. I am not at all like my brother—I suppose you know my brother? He thinks it a kind of disgrace to be put into the papers; if you were to quote him he would never forgive you."

"He needn't be afraid; I shall never refer to him," said Miss Stackpole, with soft dryness. "That's another reason," she added, "why I wanted to come and see you. You know Mr. Osmond married my dearest friend."

"Ah, yes; you were a friend of Isabel's. I was trying to think what I knew about you."

"I am quite willing to be known by that," Henrietta declared. "But that isn't what your brother likes to know me by. He has tried to break up my relations with Isabel."

"Don't permit it," said the Countess.

"That's what I want to talk about. I am going to Rome."

"So am I!" the Countess cried. "We will go together."

"With great pleasure. And when I write about my journey I will mention you by name, as my companion."

The Countess sprang from her chair and came and sat on the sofa beside her visitor.

"Ah, you must send me the paper! My husband won't like it; but he need never see it. Besides, he doesn't know how to read."

Henrietta's large eyes became immense.

"Doesn't know how to read? May I put that into my letter?"

"Into your letter?"

"In the *Interviewer*. That's my paper."

"Oh yes, if you like; with his name. Are you going to stay with Isabel?"

Henrietta held up her head, gazing a little in silence at her hostess.

"She has not asked me. I wrote to her I was coming, and she answered that she would engage a room for me at a *pension*."

The Countess listened with extreme interest.

"That's Osmond," she remarked, pregnantly.

"Isabel ought to resist," said Miss Stackpole. "I am afraid she has changed a great deal. I told her she would."

"I am sorry to hear it; I hoped she would have her own way. Why doesn't my brother like you?" the Countess added, ingenuously.

"I don't know, and I don't care. He is perfectly welcome not to like me; I don't want every one to like me; I should think less of myself if some people did. A journalist can't hope to do much good unless he gets a good deal hated; that's the way he knows how his

work goes on. And it's just the same for a lady. But I didn't expect it of Isabel."

"Do you mean that she hates you?" the Countess inquired.

"I don't know; I want to see. That's what I am going to Rome for."

"Dear me, what a tiresome errand!" the Countess exclaimed.

"She doesn't write to me in the same way; it's easy to see there's a difference. If you know anything," Miss Stackpole went on, "I should like to hear it beforehand, so as to decide on the line I shall take."

The Countess thrust out her under lip and gave a gradual shrug.

"I know very little; I see and hear very little of Osmond. He doesn't like me any better than he appears to like you."

"Yet you are not a lady-correspondent," said Henrietta, pensively.

"Oh, he has plenty of reasons. Nevertheless they have invited me—I am to stay in the house!" And the Countess smiled almost fiercely; her exultation, for the moment, took little account of Miss Stackpole's disappointment.

This lady, however, regarded it very placidly.

"I should not have gone if she had asked me. That is, I think I should not; and I am glad I hadn't to make up my mind. It would have been a very difficult question. I should not have liked to turn away from her, and yet I should not have been happy under her roof. A *pension* will suit me very well. But that is not all."

"Rome is very good just now," said the Countess; "there are all sorts of smart people. Did you ever hear of Lord Warburton?"

"Hear of him? I know him very well. Do you consider him very smart?" Henrietta inquired.

"I don't know him, but I am told he is extremely *grand seigneur*. He is making love to Isabel."

"Making love to her?"

"So I'm told; I don't know the details," said the Countess lightly. "But Isabel is pretty safe."

Henrietta gazed earnestly at her companion; for a moment she said nothing.

"When do you go to Rome?" she inquired, abruptly.

"Not for a week, I am afraid."

"I shall go to-morrow," Henrietta said. "I think I had better not wait."

"Dear me, I am sorry; I am having some dresses made. I am told Isabel receives immensely. But I shall see you there; I shall call on you at your *pension*." Henrietta sat still—she was lost in thought; and suddenly the Countess cried, "Ah, but if you don't go with me you can't describe our journey!"

Miss Stackpole seemed unmoved by this consideration; she was thinking of something else, and she presently expressed it.

"I am not sure that I understand you about Lord Warburton."

"Understand me? I mean he's very nice, that's all."

"Do you consider it nice to make love to married women?" Henrietta inquired, softly.

The Countess stared, and then, with a little violent laugh—

"It's certain that all the nice men do it. Get married and you'll see!" she added.

"That idea would be enough to prevent me," said Miss Stackpole. "I should want my own husband; I shouldn't want any one else's. Do you mean that Isabel is guilty—is guilty—" and she paused a little, choosing her expression.

"Do I mean she's guilty? Oh dear no, not yet, I hope. I only mean that Osmond is very tiresome, and that Lord Warburton is, as I hear, a great deal at the house. I'm afraid you are scandalised."

"No, I am very anxious," Henrietta said.

"Ah, you are not very complimentary to Isabel! You should have more confidence. I tell you," the Countess added quickly, "if it will be a comfort to you I will engage to draw him off."

Miss Stackpole answered at first only with the deeper solemnity of her eyes.

"You don't understand me," she said after a while. "I haven't the idea that you seem to suppose. I am not afraid for Isabel—in that way. I am only afraid she is unhappy—that's what I want to get at."

The Countess gave a dozen turns of the head; she looked impatient and sarcastic.

"That may very well be; for my part I should like to know whether Osmond is."

Miss Stackpole had begun to bore her a little.

"If she is really changed that must be at the bottom of it," Henrietta went on.

"You will see; she will tell you," said the Countess.

"Ah, she may not tell me—that's what I am afraid of!"

"Well, if Osmond isn't enjoying himself I flatter myself I shall discover it," the Countess rejoined.

"I don't care for that," said Henrietta.

"I do immensely! If Isabel is unhappy I am very sorry for her, but I can't help it. I might tell her something that would make her worse, but I can't tell her anything that would console her. What did she go and marry him for? If she had listened to me she would have got rid of him. I will forgive her however, if I find she has made things hot for him! If she has simply allowed him to trample upon her I don't know that I shall even pity her. But I don't think that's very likely. I count upon finding that if she is miserable she has at least made him so."

Henrietta got up; these seemed to her, naturally, very dreadful expectations. She honestly believed that she had no desire to see Mr. Osmond unhappy; and indeed he could not be for her the subject of a flight of fancy. She was on the whole rather disappointed in the Countess, whose mind moved in a narrower circle than she had imagined.

"It will be better if they love each other," she said, gravely.

"They can't. He can't love any one."

"I presumed that was the case. But it only increases my fear for Isabel. I shall positively start to-morrow."

"Isabel certainly has devotees," said the Countess, smiling very vividly. "I declare I don't pity her."

"It may be that I can't assist her," said Miss Stackpole, as if it were well not to have illusions.

"You can have wanted to, at any rate; that's some-

thing. I believe that's what you came from America for," the Countess suddenly added.

"Yes, I wanted to look after her," Henrietta said, serenely.

Her hostess stood there smiling at her, with her small bright eyes and her eager-looking nose; a flush had come into each of her cheeks.

"Ah, that's very pretty—*c'est bien gentil!*" she said. "Isn't that what they call friendship?"

"I don't know what they call it. I thought I had better come."

"She is very happy—she is very fortunate," the Countess went on. "She has others besides." And then she broke out, passionately. "She is more fortunate than I! I am as unhappy as she—I have a very bad husband; he is a great deal worse than Osmond. And I have no friends. I thought I had, but they are gone. No one would do for me what you have done for her."

Henrietta was touched; there was nature in this bitter effusion. She gazed at her companion a moment, and then—

"Look here, Countess, I will do anything for you that you like. I will wait over and travel with you."

"Never mind," the Countess answered, with a quick change of tone; "only describe me in the newspaper!"

Henrietta, before leaving her, however, was obliged to make her understand that she could not give a fictitious representation of her journey to Rome. Miss Stackpole was a strictly veracious reporter.

On quitting the Countess she took her way to the Lung' Arno, the sunny quay beside the yellow river,

where the bright-faced hotels familiar to tourists stand all in a row. She had learned her way before this through the streets of Florence (she was very quick in such matters), and was therefore able to turn with great decision of step out of the little square which forms the approach to the bridge of the Holy Trinity. She proceeded to the left, towards the Ponte Vecchio, and stopped in front of one of the hotels which overlook that delightful structure. Here she drew forth a small pocket-book, took from it a card and a pencil, and, after meditating a moment, wrote a few words. It is our privilege to look over her shoulder, and if we exercise it we may read the brief query—"Could I see you this evening for a few moments on a very important matter?" Henrietta added that she should start on the morrow for Rome. Armed with this little document she approached the porter, who now had taken up his station in the doorway, and asked if Mr. Goodwood were at home. The porter replied, as porters always reply, that he had gone out about twenty minutes before; whereupon Henrietta presented her card and begged it might be handed to him on his return. She left the inn and took her course along the quay to the severe portico of the Uffizi, through which she presently reached the entrance of the famous gallery of paintings. Making her way in, she ascended the high staircase which leads to the upper chambers. The long corridor, glazed on one side and decorated with antique busts, which gives admission to these apartments, presented an empty vista, in which the bright winter light twinkled upon the marble floor. The gallery is very cold, and during the midwinter weeks is but scantily visited. Miss Stackpole may

appear more ardent in her quest of artistic beauty than she has hitherto struck us as being, but she had after all her preferences and admirations. One of the latter was the little Correggio of the Tribune—the Virgin kneeling down before the sacred infant, who lies in a litter of straw, and clapping her hands to him while he delightedly laughs and crows. Henrietta had taken a great fancy to this intimate scene—she thought it the most beautiful picture in the world. On her way, at present, from New York to Rome, she was spending but three days in Florence, but she had reminded herself that they must not elapse without her paying another visit to her favourite work of art. She had a great sense of beauty in all ways, and it involved a good many intellectual obligations. She was about to turn into the Tribune when a gentleman came out of it; whereupon she gave a little exclamation and stood before Caspar Goodwood.

“I have just been at your hotel,” she said. “I left a card for you.”

“I am very much honoured,” Caspar Goodwood answered, as if he really meant it.

“It was not to honour you I did it; I have called on you before, and I know you don’t like it. It was to talk to you a little about something.”

He looked for a moment at the buckle in her hat. “I shall be very glad to hear what you wish to say.”

“You don’t like to talk with me,” said Henrietta. “But I don’t care for that; I don’t talk for your amusement. I wrote a word to ask you to come and see me; but since I have met you here this will do as well.”

"I was just going away," Goodwood said; "but of course I will stop." He was civil, but he was not enthusiastic.

Henrietta, however, never looked for great professions, and she was so much in earnest that she was thankful he would listen to her on any terms. She asked him first, however, if he had seen all the pictures.

"All I want to. I have been here an hour."

"I wonder if you have seen my Correggio," said Henrietta. "I came up on purpose to have a look at it." She went into the Tribune, and he slowly accompanied her.

"I suppose I have seen it, but I didn't know it was yours. I don't remember pictures—especially that sort." She had pointed out her favourite work; and he asked her if it was about Correggio that she wished to talk with him.

"No," said Henrietta, "it's about something less harmonious!" They had the small, brilliant room, a splendid cabinet of treasures, to themselves; there was only a custode hovering about the Medicean Venus. "I want you to do me a favour," Miss Stackpole went on.

Caspar Goodwood frowned a little, but he expressed no embarrassment at the sense of not looking eager. His face was that of a much older man than our earlier friend. "I'm sure it's something I shan't like," he said, rather loud.

"No, I don't think you will like it. If you did, it would be no favour."

"Well, let us hear it," he said, in the tone of a man quite conscious of his own reasonableness.

"You may say there is no particular reason why you should do me a favour. Indeed, I only know of one: the fact that if you would let me I would gladly do you one." Her soft, exact tone, in which there was no attempt at effect, had an extreme sincerity; and her companion, though he presented rather a hard surface, could not help being touched by it. When he was touched he rarely showed it, however, by the usual signs; he neither blushed, nor looked away, nor looked conscious. He only fixed his attention more directly; he seemed to consider with added firmness. Henrietta went on therefore disinterestedly, without the sense of an advantage. "I may say now, indeed—it seems a good time—that if I have ever annoyed you (and I think sometimes that I have), it is because I knew that I was willing to suffer annoyance for you. I have troubled you—doubtless. But I would take trouble for you."

Goodwood hesitated. "You are taking trouble now."

"Yes, I am, some. I want you to consider whether it is better on the whole that you should go to Rome."

"I thought you were going to say that!" Goodwood exclaimed, rather artlessly.

"You *have* considered it, then?"

"Of course I have, very carefully. I have looked all round it. Otherwise I shouldn't have come as far as this. That's what I stayed in Paris two months for; I was thinking it over."

"I am afraid you decided as you liked. You decided it was best, because you were so much attracted."

"Best for whom, do you mean?" Goodwood inquired.

"Well, for yourself first. For Mrs. Osmond next."

"Oh, it won't do her any good! I don't flatter myself that."

"Won't it do her harm?—that's the question."

"I don't see what it will matter to her. I am nothing to Mrs. Osmond. But if you want to know, I do want to see her myself."

"Yes, and that's why you go."

"Of course it is. Could there be a better reason?"

"How will it help you? that's what I want to know," said Miss Stackpole.

"That's just what I can't tell you; it's just what I was thinking about in Paris."

"It will make you more discontented."

"Why do you say more so?" Goodwood asked, rather sternly. "How do you know I am discontented?"

"Well," said Henrietta, hesitating a little—"you seem never to have cared for another."

"How do you know what I care for?" he cried, with a big blush. "Just now I care to go to Rome."

Henrietta looked at him in silence, with a sad yet luminous expression. "Well," she observed, at last, "I only wanted to tell you what I think; I had it on my mind. Of course you think it's none of my business. But nothing is any one's business, on that principle."

"It's very kind of you; I am greatly obliged to you for your interest," said Caspar Goodwood. "I shall go to Rome, and I shan't hurt Mrs. Osmond."

"You won't hurt her, perhaps. But will you help her?—that is the question."

"Is she in need of help?" he asked, slowly, with a penetrating look.

"Most women always are," said Henrietta, with conscientious evasiveness, and generalising less hopefully than usual. "If you go to Rome," she added, "I hope you will be a true friend—not a selfish one!" And she turned away and began to look at the pictures.

Caspar Goodwood let her go, and stood watching her while she wandered round the room; then, after a moment, he rejoined her. "You have heard something about her here," he said in a moment. "I should like to know what you have heard."

Henrietta had never prevaricated in her life, and though on this occasion there might have been a fitness in doing so, she decided, after a moment's hesitation, to make no superficial exception. "Yes, I have heard," she answered; "but as I don't want you to go to Rome I won't tell you."

"Just as you please. I shall see for myself," said Goodwood. Then, inconsistently—for him, "You have heard she is unhappy!" he added.

"Oh, you won't see that!" Henrietta exclaimed.

"I hope not. When do you start?"

"To-morrow, by the evening train. And you?"

Goodwood hesitated; he had no desire to make his journey to Rome in Miss Stackpole's company. His indifference to this advantage was not of the same character as Gilbert Osmond's, but it had at this moment an equal distinctness. It was rather a tribute to Miss Stackpole's virtues than a reference to her faults.

He thought her very remarkable, very brilliant, and he had, in theory, no objection to the class to which she belonged. Lady-correspondents appeared to him a part of the natural scheme of things in a progressive country, and though he never read their letters he supposed that they ministered somehow to social progress. But it was this very eminence of their position that made him wish that Miss Stackpole did not take so much for granted. She took for granted that he was always ready for some allusion to Mrs. Osmond; she had done so when they met in Paris, six weeks after his arrival in Europe, and she had repeated the assumption with every successive opportunity. He had no wish whatever to allude to Mrs. Osmond; he was *not* always thinking of her; he was perfectly sure of that. He was the most reserved, the least colloquial of men, and this inquiring authoress was constantly flashing her lantern into the quiet darkness of his soul. He wished she didn't care so much; he even wished, though it might seem rather brutal of him, that she would leave him alone. In spite of this, however, he just now made other reflections—which show how widely different, in effect, his ill-humour was from Gilbert Osmond's. He wished to go immediately to Rome; he would have liked to go alone, in the night-train. He hated the European railway-carriages, in which one sat for hours in a vice, knee to knee and nose to nose with a foreigner to whom one presently found one's self objecting with all the added vehemence of one's wish to have the window open; and if they were worse at night even than by day, at least at night one could sleep and dream of an American saloon-car. But he could not take a night-train

when Miss Stackpole was starting in the morning; it seemed to him that this would be an insult to an unprotected woman. Nor could he wait until after she had gone, unless he should wait longer than he had patience for. It would not do to start the next day. She worried him; she oppressed him; the idea of spending the day in a European railway-carriage with her offered a complication of irritations. Still, she was a lady travelling alone; it was his duty to put himself out for her. There could be no two questions about that; it was a perfectly clear necessity. He looked extremely grave for some moments, and then he said, without any of the richness of gallantry, but in a tone of extreme distinctness—"Of course, if you are going to-morrow, I will go too, as I may be of assistance to you."

"Well, Mr. Goodwood, I should hope so!" Henrietta remarked, serenely.

VI.

I HAVE already had reason to say that Isabel knew that her husband was displeased by the continuance of Ralph's visit to Rome. This knowledge was very present to her as she went to her cousin's hotel the day after she had invited Lord Warburton to give a tangible proof of his sincerity; and at this moment, as at others, she had a sufficient perception of the sources of Osmond's displeasure. He wished her to have no freedom of mind, and he knew perfectly well that Ralph was an apostle of freedom. It was just because

he was this, Isabel said to herself, that it was a refreshment to go and see him. It will be perceived that she partook of this refreshment in spite of her husband's disapproval; that is, she partook of it, as she flattered herself, discreetly. She had not as yet undertaken to act in direct opposition to Osmond's wishes; he was her master; she gazed at moments with a sort of incredulous blankness at this fact. It weighed upon her imagination, however; constantly present to her mind were all the traditionary decencies and sanctities of marriage. The idea of violating them filled her with shame as well as with dread, for when she gave herself away she had lost sight of this contingency in the perfect belief that her husband's intentions were as generous as her own. She seemed to see, however, the rapid approach of the day when she should have to take back something that she had solemnly given. Such a ceremony would be odious and monstrous; she tried to shut her eyes to it meanwhile. Osmond would do nothing to help it by beginning first; he would put that burden upon her. He had not yet formally forbidden her to go and see Ralph; but she felt sure that unless Ralph should very soon depart this prohibition would come. How could poor Ralph depart? The weather as yet made it impossible. She could perfectly understand her husband's wish for the event; to be just, she didn't see how he could like her to be with her cousin. Ralph never said a word against him; but Osmond's objections were none the less founded. If Osmond should positively interpose, then she should have to decide, and that would not be easy. The prospect made her heart beat and her cheeks burn, as I say, in advance; there were moments

when, in her wish to avoid an open rupture with her husband, she found herself wishing that Ralph would start even at a risk. And it was of no use that when catching herself in this state of mind, she called herself a feeble spirit, a coward. It was not that she loved Ralph less, but that almost anything seemed preferable to repudiating the most serious act—the single sacred act—of her life. That appeared to make the whole future hideous. To break with Osmond once would be to break for ever; any open acknowledgment of irreconcilable needs would be an admission that their whole attempt had proved a failure. For them there could be no condonement, no compromise, no easy forgetfulness, no formal readjustment. They had attempted only one thing, but that one thing was to have been exquisite. Once they missed it, nothing else would do; there is no substitute for that success. For the moment, Isabel went to the Hôtel de Paris as often as she thought well; the measure of expediency resided in her moral consciousness. It had been very liberal to-day, for in addition to the general truth that she couldn't leave Ralph to die alone, she had something important to ask of him. This indeed was Gilbert's business as well as her own.

She came very soon to what she wished to speak of.

"I want you to answer me a question," she said. "It's about Lord Warburton."

"I think I know it," Ralph answered from his arm-chair, out of which his thin legs protruded at greater length than ever.

"It's very possible," said Isabel. "Please then answer it."

"Oh, I don't say I can do that."

"You are intimate with him," said Isabel; "you have a great deal of observation of him."

"Very true. But think how he must dissimulate!"

"Why should he dissimulate? That's not his nature."

"Ah, you must remember that the circumstances are peculiar," said Ralph, with an air of private amusement.

"To a certain extent—yes. But is he really in love?"

"Very much, I think. I can make that out."

"Ah!" said Isabel, with a certain dryness.

Ralph looked at her a moment; a shade of perplexity mingled with his mild hilarity.

"You said that as if you were disappointed."

Isabel got up, slowly, smoothing her gloves, and eyeing them thoughtfully.

"It's after all no business of mine."

"You are very philosophic," said her cousin. And then in a moment—"May I inquire what you are talking about?"

Isabel stared a little. "I thought you knew. Lord Warburton tells me he desires to marry Pansy. I have told you that before, without eliciting a comment from you. You might risk one this morning, I think. Is it your belief that he really cares for her?"

"Ah, for Pansy, no!" cried Ralph, very positively.

"But you said just now that he did."

Ralph hesitated a moment. "That he cared for you, Mrs. Osmond."

Isabel shook her head, gravely. "That's nonsense, you know."

"Of course it is. But the nonsense is Warburton's, not mine."

"That would be very tiresome," Isabel said, speaking, as she flattered herself, with much subtlety.

"I ought to tell you indeed," Ralph went on, "that to me he has denied it."

"It's very good of you to talk about it together! Has he also told you that he is in love with Pansy?"

"He has spoken very well of her—very properly. He has let me know, of course, that he thinks she would do very well at Lockleigh."

"Does he really think it?"

"Ah, what Warburton really thinks——!" said Ralph.

Isabel fell to smoothing her gloves again; they were long, loose gloves upon which she could freely expend herself. Soon, however, she looked up, and then—

"Ah, Ralph, you give me no help!" she cried, abruptly, passionately.

It was the first time she had alluded to the need for help, and the words shook her cousin with their violence. He gave a long murmur of relief, of pity, of tenderness; it seemed to him that at last the gulf between them had been bridged. It was this that made him exclaim in a moment—

"How unhappy you must be!"

He had no sooner spoken than she recovered her self-possession, and the first use she made of it was to pretend she had not heard him.

"When I talk of your helping me, I talk great nonsense," she said, with a quick smile. "The idea of my troubling you with my domestic embarrass-

ments! The matter is very simple; Lord Warburton must get on by himself. I can't undertake to help him."

"He ought to succeed easily," said Ralph.

Isabel hesitated a moment. "Yes—but he has not always succeeded."

"Very true. You know, however, how that always surprised me. Is Miss Osmond capable of giving us a surprise?"

"It will come from him, rather. I suspect that after all he will let the matter drop."

"He will do nothing dishonourable," said Ralph.

"I am very sure of that. Nothing can be more honourable than for him to leave the poor child alone. She cares for some one else, and it is cruel to attempt to bribe her by magnificent offers to give him up."

"Cruel to the other person perhaps—the one she cares for. But Warburton isn't obliged to mind that."

"No, cruel to her," said Isabel. "She would be very unhappy if she were to allow herself to be persuaded to desert poor Mr. Rosier. That idea seems to amuse you; of course you are not in love with him. He has the merit of being in love with her. She can see at a glance that Lord Warburton is not."

"He would be very good to her," said Ralph.

"He has been good to her already. Fortunately, however, he has not said a word to disturb her. He could come and bid her good-bye to-morrow with perfect propriety."

"How would your husband like that?"

"Not at all; and he may be right in not liking it. Only he must obtain satisfaction himself."

"Has he commissioned you to obtain it?" Ralph ventured to ask.

"It was natural that as an old friend of Lord Warburton's—an older friend, that is, than Osmond—I should take an interest in his intentions."

"Take an interest in his renouncing them, you mean."

Isabel hesitated, frowning a little. "Let me understand. Are you pleading his cause?"

"Not in the least. I am very glad he should not become your step-daughter's husband. It makes such a very queer relation to you!" said Ralph, smiling. "But I'm rather nervous lest your husband should think you haven't pushed him enough."

Isabel found herself able to smile as well as he.

"He knows me well enough not to have expected me to push. He himself has no intention of pushing, I presume. I am not afraid I shall not be able to justify myself!" she said, lightly.

Her mask had dropped for an instant, but she had put it on again, to Ralph's infinite disappointment. He had caught a glimpse of her natural face, and he wished immensely to look into it. He had an almost savage desire to hear her complain of her husband—hear her say that she should be held accountable for Lord Warburton's defection. Ralph was certain that this was her situation; he knew by instinct, in advance, the form that in such an event Osmond's displeasure would take. It could only take the meanest and cruellest. He would have liked to warn Isabel of it—to let her see at least that he knew it. It little mattered that Isabel would know it much better; it was for his own satisfaction more than for hers that he longed to show her that he was not deceived. He tried and tried again to make her betray Osmond; he

felt cold-blooded, cruel, dishonourable almost, in doing so. But it scarcely mattered, for he only failed. What had she come for then, and why did she seem almost to offer him a chance to violate their tacit convention? Why did she ask him his advice, if she gave him no liberty to answer her? How could they talk of her domestic embarrassments, as it pleased her humorously to designate them, if the principal factor was not to be mentioned? These contradictions were themselves but an indication of her trouble, and her cry for help, just before, was the only thing he was bound to consider.

"You will be decidedly at variance, all the same," he said, in a moment. And as she answered nothing, looking as if she scarcely understood—"You will find yourselves thinking very differently," he continued.

"That may easily happen, among the most united couples!" She took up her parasol; he saw that she was nervous, afraid of what he might say. "It's a matter we can hardly quarrel about, however," she added; "for almost all the interest is on his side. That is very natural. Pansy is after all his daughter—not mine." And she put out her hand to wish him good-bye.

Ralph took an inward resolution that she should not leave him without his letting her know that he knew everything; it seemed too great an opportunity to lose. "Do you know what his interest will make him say?" he asked, as he took her hand. She shook her head, rather dryly—not discouragingly—and he went on, "It will make him say that your want of zeal is owing to jealousy." He stopped a moment; her face made him afraid.

"To jealousy?"

"To jealousy of his daughter."

She blushed red and threw back her head.

"You are not kind," she said, in a voice that he had never heard on her lips.

"Be frank with me, and you'll see," said Ralph.

But she made no answer; she only shook her hand out of his own, which he tried still to hold, and rapidly went out of the room. She made up her mind to speak to Pansy, and she took an occasion on the same day, going to the young girl's room before dinner. Pansy was already dressed; she was always in advance of the time; it seemed to illustrate her pretty patience and the graceful stillness with which she could sit and wait. At present she was seated in her fresh array, before the bed-room fire; she had blown out her candles on the completion of her toilet, in accordance with the economical habits in which she had been brought up and which she was now more careful than ever to observe; so that the room was lighted only by a couple of logs. The rooms in the Palazzo Roccanera were as spacious as they were numerous, and Pansy's virginal bower was an immense chamber with a dark, heavily-timbered ceiling. Its diminutive mistress, in the midst of it, appeared but a speck of humanity, and as she got up, with quick deference, to welcome Isabel, the latter was more than ever struck with her shy sincerity. Isabel had a difficult task—the only thing was to perform it as simply as possible. She felt bitter and angry, but she warned herself against betraying it to Pansy. She was afraid even of looking too grave, or at least too stern; she was afraid of frightening her. But Pansy seemed to have

guessed that she had come a little as a confessor; for after she had moved the chair in which she had been sitting a little nearer to the fire, and Isabel had taken her place in it, she kneeled down on a cushion in front of her, looking up and resting her clasped hands on her stepmother's knees. What Isabel wished to do was to hear from her own lips that her mind was not occupied with Lord Warburton; but if she desired the assurance, she felt herself by no means at liberty to provoke it. The girl's father would have qualified this as rank treachery; and indeed Isabel knew that if Pansy should display the smallest germ of a disposition to encourage Lord Warburton, her own duty was to hold her tongue. It was difficult to interrogate without appearing to suggest; Pansy's supreme simplicity, an innocence even more complete than Isabel had yet judged it, gave to the most tentative inquiry something of the effect of an admonition. As she knelt there in the vague firelight, with her pretty dress vaguely shining, her hands folded half in appeal and half in submission, her soft eyes, raised and fixed, full of the seriousness of the situation, she looked to Isabel like a childish martyr decked out for sacrifice and scarcely presuming even to hope to avert it. When Isabel said to her that she had never yet spoken to her of what might have been going on in relation to her getting married, but that her silence had not been indifference or ignorance, had only been the desire to leave her at liberty, Pansy bent forward, raised her face nearer and nearer to Isabel's, and with a little murmur which evidently expressed a deep longing, answered that she had greatly wished her to speak, and that she begged her to advise her now.

"It's difficult for me to advise you," Isabel rejoined. "I don't know how I can undertake that. That's for your father; you must get his advice, and, above all, you must act upon it."

At this Pansy dropped her eyes; for a moment she said nothing.

"I think I should like your advice better than papa's," she presently remarked.

"That's not as it should be," said Isabel, coldly. "I love you very much, but your father loves you better."

"It isn't because you love me—it's because you're a lady," Pansy answered, with the air of saying something very reasonable. "A lady can advise a young girl better than a man."

"I advise you, then, to pay the greatest respect to your father's wishes."

"Ah, yes," said Pansy, eagerly, "I must do that."

"But if I speak to you now about your getting married, it's not for your own sake, it's for mine," Isabel went on. "If I try to learn from you what you expect, what you desire, it is only that I may act accordingly."

Pansy stared, and then, very quickly—

"Will you do everything I desire?" she asked.

"Before I say yes, I must know what such things are."

Pansy presently told her that the only thing she wished in life was to marry Mr. Rosier. He had asked her, and she had told him that she would do so if her papa would allow it. Now her papa wouldn't allow it.

"Very well, then, it's impossible," said Isabel.

"Yes, it's impossible," said Pansy, without a sigh,

and with the same extreme attention in her clear little face.

"You must think of something else, then," Isabel went on; but Pansy, sighing then, told her that she had attempted this feat without the least success.

"You think of those that think of you," she said, with a faint smile. "I know that Mr. Rosier thinks of me."

"He ought not to," said Isabel, loftily. "Your father has expressly requested he shouldn't."

"He can't help it, because he knows that I think of him."

"You shouldn't think of him. There is some excuse for him, perhaps; but there is none for you!"

"I wish you would try to find one," the girl exclaimed, as if she were praying to the Madonna.

"I should be very sorry to attempt it," said the Madonna, with unusual frigidity. "If you knew some one else was thinking of you, would you think of him?"

"No one can think of me as Mr. Rosier does; no one has the right."

"Ah, but I don't admit Mr. Rosier's right," Isabel cried, hypocritically.

Pansy only gazed at her; she was evidently deeply puzzled; and Isabel, taking advantage of it, began to represent to her the miserable consequences of disobeying her father. At this Pansy stopped her, with the assurance that she would never disobey him, would never marry without his consent. And she announced, in the serenest, simplest tone, that though she might never marry Mr. Rosier, she would never cease to think of him. She appeared to have accepted the

idea of eternal singleness; but Isabel of course was free to reflect that she had no conception of its meaning. She was perfectly sincere; she was prepared to give up her lover. This might seem an important step toward taking another, but for Pansy, evidently, it did not lead in that direction. She felt no bitterness towards her father; there was no bitterness in her heart; there was only the sweetness of fidelity to Edward Rosier, and a strange, exquisite intimation that she could prove it better by remaining single than even by marrying him.

"Your father would like you to make a better marriage," said Isabel. "Mr. Rosier's fortune is not very large."

"How do you mean better—if that would be good enough? And I have very little money; why should I look for a fortune?"

"Your having so little is a reason for looking for more." Isabel was grateful for the dimness of the room; she felt as if her face were hideously insincere. She was doing this for Osmond; this was what one had to do for Osmond! Pansy's solemn eyes, fixed on her own, almost embarrassed her; she was ashamed to think that she had made so light of the girl's preference.

"What should you like me to do?" said Pansy, softly.

The question was a terrible one, and Isabel pusillanimously took refuge in a generalisation.

"To remember all the pleasure it is in your power to give your father."

"To marry some one else, you mean—if he should ask me?"

For a moment Isabel's answer caused itself to be waited for; then she heard herself utter it, in the stillness that Pansy's attention seemed to make.

"Yes—to marry some one else."

Pansy's eyes grew more penetrating; Isabel believed that she was doubting her sincerity, and the impression took force from her slowly getting up from her cushion. She stood there a moment, with her small hands unclasped, and then she said, with a timorous sigh—

"Well, I hope no one will ask me!"

"There has been a question of that. Some one else would have been ready to ask you."

"I don't think he can have been ready," said Pansy.

"It would appear so—if he had been sure that he would succeed."

"If he had been sure? Then he was not ready!"

Isabel thought this rather sharp; she also got up, and stood a moment, looking into the fire. "Lord Warburton has shown you great attention," she said; "of course you know it's of him I speak." She found herself, against her expectation, almost placed in the position of justifying herself; which led her to introduce this nobleman more crudely than she had intended.

"He has been very kind to me, and I like him very much. But if you mean that he will ask me to marry him, I think you are mistaken."

"Perhaps I am. But your father would like it extremely."

Pansy shook her head, with a little wise smile. "Lord Warburton won't ask me simply to please papa."

"Your father would like you to encourage him," Isabel went on, mechanically.

"How can I encourage him?"

"I don't know. Your father must tell you that."

Pansy said nothing for a moment; she only continued to smile as if she were in possession of a bright assurance. "There is no danger—no danger!" she declared at last.

There was a conviction in the way she said this, and a felicity in her believing it, which made Isabel feel very awkward. She felt accused of dishonesty, and the idea was disgusting. To repair her self-respect, she was on the point of saying that Lord Warburton had let her know that there *was* a danger. But she did not; she only said—in her embarrassment rather wide of the mark—that he surely had been most kind, most friendly.

"Yes, he has been very kind," Pansy answered. "That's what I like him for."

"Why then is the difficulty so great?"

"I have always felt sure that he knows that I don't want—what did you say I should do?—to encourage him. He knows I don't want to marry, and he wants me to know that he therefore won't trouble me. That's the meaning of his kindness. It's as if he said to me, 'I like you very much, but if it doesn't please you I will never say it again.' I think that is very kind, very noble," Pansy went on, with deepening positiveness. "That is all we have said to each other. And he doesn't care for me, either. Ah no, there is no danger!"

Isabel was touched with wonder at the depths of perception of which this submissive little person was capable; she felt afraid of Pansy's wisdom—began

almost to retreat before it. "You must tell your father that," she remarked, reservedly.

"I think I would rather not," Pansy answered.

"You ought not to let him have false hopes."

"Perhaps not; but it will be good for me that he should. So long as he believes that Lord Warburton intends anything of the kind you say, papa won't propose any one else. And that will be an advantage for me," said Pansy, very lucidly.

There was something brilliant in her lucidity, and it made Isabel draw a long breath. It relieved her of a heavy responsibility. Pansy had a sufficient illumination of her own, and Isabel felt that she herself just now had no light to spare from her small stock. Nevertheless it still clung to her that she must be loyal to Osmond, that she was on her honour in dealing with his daughter. Under the influence of this sentiment she threw out another suggestion before she retired—a suggestion with which it seemed to her that she should have done her utmost. "Your father takes for granted at least that you would like to marry a nobleman."

Pansy stood in the open doorway; she had drawn back the curtain for Isabel to pass. "I think Mr. Rosier looks like one!" she remarked, very gravely.

VII.

LORD WARBURTON was not seen in Mrs. Osmond's drawing-room for several days, and Isabel could not fail to observe that her husband said nothing to her about having received a letter from him. She could not fail to observe, either, that Osmond was in a state of expectancy, and that though it was not agreeable to him to betray it, he thought their distinguished friend kept him waiting quite too long. At the end of four days he alluded to his absence.

"What has become of Warburton? What does he mean by treating one like a tradesman with a bill?"

"I know nothing about him," Isabel said. "I saw him last Friday, at the German ball. He told me then that he meant to write to you."

"He has never written to me."

"So I supposed, from your not having told me."

"He's an odd fish," said Osmond, comprehensively. And on Isabel's making no rejoinder, he went on to inquire whether it took his lordship five days to indite a letter. "Does he form his words with such difficulty?"

"I don't know," said Isabel. "I have never had a letter from him."

"Never had a letter? I had an idea that you were at one time in intimate correspondence."

Isabel answered that this had not been the case, and let the conversation drop. On the morrow, how-

ever, coming into the drawing-room late in the afternoon, her husband took it up again.

"When Lord Warburton told you of his intention of writing, what did you say to him?" he asked.

Isabel hesitated a moment. "I think I told him not to forget it."

"Did you believe there was a danger of that?"

"As you say, he's an odd fish."

"Apparently he has forgotten it," said Osmond. "Be so good as to remind him."

"Should you like me to write to him?" Isabel asked.

"I have no objection whatever."

"You expect too much of me."

"Ah yes, I expect a great deal of you."

"I am afraid I shall disappoint you," said Isabel.

"My expectations have survived a good deal of disappointment."

"Of course I know that. Think how I must have disappointed myself! If you really wish to capture Lord Warburton, you must do it yourself."

For a couple of minutes Osmond answered nothing! then he said—"That won't be easy, with you working against me."

Isabel started; she felt herself beginning to tremble. He had a way of looking at her through half-closed eyelids, as if he were thinking of her but scarcely saw her, which seemed to her to have a wonderfully cruel intention. It appeared to recognise her as a disagreeable necessity of thought, but to ignore her, for the time, as a presence. That was the expression of his eyes now. "I think you accuse me of something very base," she said.

"I accuse you of not being trustworthy. If he doesn't come up to the mark it will be because you have kept him off. I don't know that it's base; it is the kind of thing a woman always thinks she may do. I have no doubt you have the finest ideas about it."

"I told you I would do what I could," said Isabel.

"Yes, that gained you time."

It came over Isabel, after he had said this, that she had once thought him beautiful. "How much you must wish to capture him!" she exclaimed, in a moment.

She had no sooner spoken than she perceived the full reach of her words, of which she had not been conscious in uttering them. They made a comparison between Osmond and herself, recalled the fact that she had once held this coveted treasure in her hand and felt herself rich enough to let it fall. A momentary exultation took possession of her—a horrible delight in having wounded him; for his face instantly told her that none of the force of her exclamation was lost. Osmond expressed nothing otherwise, however; he only said, quickly, "Yes, I wish it very much."

At this moment a servant came in, as if to usher a visitor, and he was followed the next by Lord Warburton, who received a visible check on seeing Osmond. He looked rapidly from the master of the house to the mistress; a movement that seemed to denote a reluctance to interrupt or even a perception of ominous conditions. Then he advanced, with his English address, in which a vague shyness seemed to offer itself as an element of good-breeding; in

which the only defect was a difficulty in achieving transitions.

Osmond was embarrassed; he found nothing to say; but Isabel remarked, promptly enough, that they had been in the act of talking about their visitor. Upon this her husband added that they hadn't known what was become of him—they had been afraid he had gone away.

"No," said Lord Warburton, smiling and looking at Osmond; "I am only on the point of going." And then he explained that he found himself suddenly recalled to England; he should start on the morrow or next day. "I am awfully sorry to leave poor Touchett!" he ended by exclaiming.

For a moment neither of his companions spoke; Osmond only leaned back in his chair, listening. Isabel didn't look at him; she could only fancy how he looked. Her eyes were upon Lord Warburton's face, where they were the more free to rest that those of his lordship carefully avoided them. Yet Isabel was sure that had she met her visitor's glance, she should have found it expressive. "You had better take poor Touchett with you," she heard her husband say, lightly enough, in a moment.

"He had better wait for warmer weather," Lord Warburton answered. "I shouldn't advise him to travel just now."

He sat there for a quarter of an hour, talking as if he might not soon see them again—unless indeed they should come to England, a course which he strongly recommended. Why shouldn't they come to England in the autumn? that struck him as a very happy thought. It would give him such pleasure to do what

he could for them—to have them come and spend a month with him. Osmond, by his own admission, had been to England but once; which was an absurd state of things. It was just the country for him—he would be sure to get on well there. Then Lord Warburton asked Isabel if she remembered what a good time she had there, and if she didn't want to try it again. Didn't she want to see Gardencourt once more? Gardencourt was really very good. Touchett didn't take proper care of it, but it was the sort of place you could hardly spoil by letting it alone. Why didn't they come and pay Touchett a visit? He surely must have asked them. Hadn't asked them? What an ill-mannered wretch! and Lord Warburton promised to give the master of Gardencourt a piece of his mind. Of course it was a mere accident; he would be delighted to have them. Spending a month with Touchett and a month with himself, and seeing all the rest of the people they must know there, they really wouldn't find it half bad. Lord Warburton added that it would amuse Miss Osmond as well, who had told him that she had never been to England and whom he had assured it was a country she deserved to see. Of course she didn't need to go to England to be admired—that was her fate everywhere; but she would be immensely liked in England, Miss Osmond would, if that was any inducement. He asked if she were not at home: couldn't he say good-bye? Not that he liked good-byes—he always funked them. When he left England the other day he had not said good-bye to any one. He had had half a mind to leave Rome without troubling Mrs. Osmond for a final interview. What could be more dreary

than a final interview? One never said the things one wanted to—one remembered them all an hour afterwards. On the other hand, one usually said a lot of things one shouldn't, simply from a sense that one had to say something. Such a sense was bewildering; it made one nervous. He had it at present, and that was the effect it produced on him. If Mrs. Osmond didn't think he spoke as he ought, she must set it down to agitation; it was no light thing to part with Mrs. Osmond. He was really very sorry to be going. He had thought of writing to her, instead of calling—but he would write to her at any rate, to tell her a lot of things that would be sure to occur to him as soon as he had left the house. They must think seriously about coming to Lockleigh.

If there was anything awkward in the circumstances of his visit or in the announcement of his departure, it failed to come to the surface. Lord Warburton talked about his agitation; but he showed it in no other manner, and Isabel saw that since he had determined on a retreat he was capable of executing it gallantly. She was very glad for him; she liked him quite well enough to wish him to appear to carry a thing off. He would do that on any occasion; not from imprudence, but simply from the habit of success; and Isabel perceived that it was not in her husband's power to frustrate this faculty. A double operation, as she sat there, went on in her mind. On one side she listened to Lord Warburton; said what was proper to him; read, more or less, between the lines of what he said himself; and wondered how he would have spoken if he had found her alone. On the other she had a perfect consciousness of Osmond's

emotion. She felt almost sorry for him; he was condemned to the sharp pain of loss without the relief of cursing. He had had a great hope, and now, as he saw it vanish into smoke, he was obliged to sit and smile and twirl his thumbs. Not that he troubled himself to smile very brightly; he treated Lord Warburton, on the whole, to as vacant a countenance as so clever a man could very well wear. It was indeed a part of Osmond's cleverness that he could look consummately uncompromised. His present appearance, however, was not a confession of disappointment; it was simply a part of Osmond's habitual system, which was to be inexpressive exactly in proportion as he was really intent. He had been intent upon Lord Warburton from the first; but he had never allowed his eagerness to irradiate his refined face. He had treated his possible son-in-law as he treated every one—with an air of being interested in him only for his own advantage, not for Gilbert Osmond's. He would give no sign now of an inward rage which was the result of a vanished prospect of gain—not the faintest nor subtlest. Isabel could be sure of that, if it was any satisfaction to her. Strangely, very strangely, it was a satisfaction; she wished Lord Warburton to triumph before her husband, and at the same time she wished her husband to be very superior before Lord Warburton. Osmond, in his way, was admirable; he had, like their visitor, the advantage of an acquired habit. It was not that of succeeding, but it was something almost as good—that of not attempting. As he leaned back in his place, listening but vaguely to Lord Warburton's friendly offers and suppressed explanations—as if it were only proper to assume that they were addressed

essentially to his wife—he had at least (since so little else was left him) the comfort of thinking how well he personally had kept out of it, and how the air of indifference, which he was now able to wear, had the added beauty of consistency. It was something to be able to look as if their visitor's movements had no relation to his own mind. Their visitor did well, certainly; but Osmond's performance was in its very nature more finished. Lord Warburton's position was after all an easy one; there was no reason in the world why he should not leave Rome. He had beneficent inclinations; but they had stopped short of fruition; he had never committed himself, and his honour was safe. Osmond appeared to take but a moderate interest in the proposal that they should go and stay with him, and in his allusion to the success Pansy might extract from their visit. He murmured a recognition, but left Isabel to say that it was a matter requiring grave consideration. Isabel, even while she made this remark, could see the great vista which had suddenly opened out in her husband's mind, with Pansy's little figure marching up the middle of it.

Lord Warburton had asked leave to bid good-bye to Pansy, but neither Isabel nor Osmond had made any motion to send for her. He had the air of giving out that his visit must be short; he sat on a small chair, as if it were only for a moment, keeping his hat in his hand. But he stayed and stayed; Isabel wondered what he was waiting for. She believed it was not to see Pansy; she had an impression that on the whole he would rather not see Pansy. It was of course so see herself alone—he had something to say

to her. Isabel had no great wish to hear it, for she was afraid it would be an explanation, and she could perfectly dispense with explanations. Osmond, however, presently got up, like a man of good taste to whom it had occurred that so inveterate a visitor might wish to say just the last word of all to the ladies.

"I have a letter to write before dinner," he said; "you must excuse me. I will see if my daughter is disengaged, and if she is she shall know you are here. Of course when you come to Rome you will always look us up. Isabel will talk to you about the English expedition; she decides all those things."

The nod with which, instead of a hand-shake, he terminated this little speech, was perhaps a rather meagre form of salutation; but on the whole it was all the occasion demanded. Isabel reflected that after he left the room Lord Warburton would have no pretext for saying—"Your husband is very angry;" which would have been extremely disagreeable to her. Nevertheless, if he had done so, she would have said—"Oh, don't be anxious. He doesn't hate *you*: it's me that he hates!"

It was only when they had been left alone together that Lord Warburton showed a certain vague awkwardness—sitting down in another chair, handling two or three of the objects that were near him. "I hope he will make Miss Osmond come," he presently remarked. "I want very much to see her."

"I'm glad it's the last time," said Isabel.

"So am I. She doesn't care for me."

"No, she doesn't care for you."

"I don't wonder at it," said Lord Warburton. Then

he added, with inconsequence—"You will come to England, won't you?"

"I think we had better not."

"Ah, you owe me a visit. Don't you remember that you were to have come to Lockleigh once, and you never did?"

"Everything is changed since then," said Isabel.

"Not changed for the worse, surely—as far as we are concerned. To see you under my roof"—and he hesitated a moment—"would be a great satisfaction."

She had feared an explanation; but that was the only one that occurred. They talked a little of Ralph, and in another moment Pansy came in, already dressed for dinner and with a little red spot in either cheek. She shook hands with Lord Warburton and stood looking up into his face with a fixed smile—a smile that Isabel knew, though his lordship probably never suspected it, to be near akin to a burst of tears.

"I am going away," he said. "I want to bid you good-bye."

"Good-bye, Lord Warburton." The young girl's voice trembled a little.

"And I want to tell you how much I wish you may be very happy."

"Thank you, Lord Warburton," Pansy answered.

He lingered a moment, and gave a glance at Isabel. "You ought to be very happy—you have got a guardian angel."

"I am sure I shall be happy," said Pansy, in the tone of a person whose certainties were always cheerful.

"Such a conviction as that will take you a great way. But if it should ever fail you, remember—

remember—" and Lord Warburton stammered a little. "Think of me sometimes, you know," he said with a vague laugh. Then he shook hands with Isabel, in silence, and presently he was gone.

When he had left the room Isabel expected an effusion of tears from her step-daughter; but Pansy in fact treated her to something very different.

"I think you *are* my guardian angel!" she exclaimed, very sweetly.

Isabel shook her head. "I am not an angel of any kind. I am at the most your good friend."

"You are a very good friend then—to have asked papa to be gentle with me."

"I have asked your father nothing," said Isabel, wondering.

"He told me just now to come to the drawing-room, and then he gave me a very kind kiss."

"Ah," said Isabel, "that was quite his own idea!"

She recognised the idea perfectly; it was very characteristic, and she was to see a great deal more of it. Even with Pansy, Osmond could not put himself the least in the wrong. They were dining out that day, and after their dinner they went to another entertainment; so that it was not till late in the evening that Isabel saw him alone. When Pansy kissed him, before going to bed, he returned her embrace with even more than his usual munificence, and Isabel wondered whether he meant it as a hint that his daughter had been injured by the machinations of her stepmother. It was a partial expression, at any rate, of what he continued to expect of his wife. Isabel was about to follow Pansy, but he remarked that he wished she would remain; he had something

to say to her. Then he walked about the drawing-room a little, while she stood waiting, in her cloak.

"I don't understand what you wish to do," he said in a moment. "I should like to know—so that I may know how to act."

"Just now I wish to go to bed. I am very tired."

"Sit down and rest; I shall not keep you long. Not there—take a comfortable place." And he arranged a multitude of cushions that were scattered in picturesque disorder upon a vast divan. This was not, however, where she seated herself; she dropped into the nearest chair. The fire had gone out; the lights in the great room were few. She drew her cloak about her; she felt mortally cold. "I think you are trying to humiliate me," Osmond went on. "It's a most absurd undertaking."

"I haven't the least idea what you mean," said Isabel.

"You have played a very deep game; you have managed it beautifully."

"What is it that I have managed?"

"You have not quite settled it, however; we shall see him again." And he stopped in front of her, with his hands in his pockets, looking down at her thoughtfully, in his usual way, which seemed meant to let her know that she was not an object, but only a rather disagreeable incident, of thought.

"If you mean that Lord Warburton is under an obligation to come back, you are wrong," Isabel said. "He is under none whatever."

"That's just what I complain of. But when I say he will come back, I don't mean that he will come from a sense of duty."

"There is nothing else to make him. I think he has quite exhausted Rome."

"Ah no, that's a shallow judgment. Rome is inexhaustible." And Osmond began to walk about again. "However, about that, perhaps, there is no hurry," he added. "It's rather a good idea of his that we should go to England. If it were not for the fear of finding your cousin there, I think I should try to persuade you."

"It may be that you will not find my cousin," said Isabel.

"I should like to be sure of it. However, I shall be as sure as possible. At the same time I should like to see his house, that you told me so much about at one time: what do you call it?—Gardencourt. It must be a charming thing. And then, you know, I have a devotion to the memory of your uncle; you made me take a great fancy to him. I should like to see where he lived and died. That, however, is a detail. Your friend was right; Pansy ought to see England."

"I have no doubt she would enjoy it," said Isabel.

"But that's a long time hence; next autumn is far off," Osmond continued; "and meantime there are things that more nearly interest us. Do you think me so very proud?" he asked, suddenly.

"I think you very strange."

"You don't understand me."

"No, not even when you insult me."

"I don't insult you; I am incapable of it. I merely speak of certain facts, and if the allusion is an injury to you the fault is not mine. It is surely a fact that you have kept all this matter quite in your own hands."

"Are you going back to Lord Warburton?" Isabel asked. "I am very tired of his name."

"You shall hear it again before we have done with it."

She had spoken of his insulting her, but it suddenly seemed to her that this ceased to be a pain. He was going down—down; the vision of such a fall made her almost giddy; that was the only pain. He was too strange, too different; he didn't touch her. Still, the working of his morbid passion was extraordinary, and she felt a rising curiosity to know in what light he saw himself justified. "I might say to you that I judge you have nothing to say to me that is worth hearing," she rejoined in a moment. "But I should perhaps be wrong. There is a thing that would be worth my hearing—to know in the plainest words of what it is you accuse me."

"Of preventing Pansy's marriage to Warburton. Are those words plain enough?"

"On the contrary, I took a great interest in it. I told you so; and when you told me that you counted on me—that I think was what you said—I accepted the obligation. I was a fool to do so, but I did it."

"You pretended to do it, and you even pretended reluctance, to make me more willing to trust you. Then you began to use your ingenuity to get him out of the way."

"I think I see what you mean," said Isabel.

"Where is the letter that you told me he had written me?" her husband asked.

"I haven't the least idea; I haven't asked him."

"You stopped it on the way," said Osmond.

Isabel slowly got up; standing there, in her white

cloak, which covered her to her feet, she might have represented the angel of disdain, first cousin to that of pity. "Oh, Osmond, for a man who was so fine!" she exclaimed, in a long murmur.

"I was never so fine as you! You have done everything you wanted. You have got him out of the way without appearing to do so, and you have placed me in the position in which you wished to see me—that of a man who tried to marry his daughter to a lord, but didn't succeed."

"Pansy doesn't care for him; she is very glad he is gone," said Isabel.

"That has nothing to do with the matter."

"And he doesn't care for Pansy."

"That won't do; you told me he did. I don't know why you wanted this particular satisfaction," Osmond continued; "you might have taken some other. It doesn't seem to me that I have been presumptuous—that I have taken too much for granted. I have been very modest about it, very quiet. The idea didn't originate with me. He began to show that he liked her before I ever thought of it. I left it all to you."

"Yes, you were very glad to leave it to me. After this you must attend to such things yourself."

He looked at her a moment, and then he turned away. "I thought you were very fond of my daughter."

"I have never been more so than to-day."

"Your affection is attended with immense limitations. However, that perhaps is natural."

"Is this all you wished to say to me?" Isabel asked, taking a candle that stood on one of the tables.

“Are you satisfied? Am I sufficiently disappointed?”

“I don’t think that on the whole you are disappointed. You have had another opportunity to try to bewilder me.”

“It’s not that. It’s proved that Pansy can aim high.”

“Poor little Pansy!” said Isabel, turning away with her candle.

VIII.

It was from Henrietta Stackpole that she learned that Caspar Goodwood had come to Rome; an event that took place three days after Lord Warburton’s departure. This latter event had been preceded by an incident of some importance to Isabel—the temporary absence, once again, of Madame Merle, who had gone to Naples to stay with a friend, the happy possessor of a villa at Posilippo. Madame Merle had ceased to minister to Isabel’s happiness, who found herself wondering whether the most discreet of women might not also by chance be the most dangerous. Sometimes, at night, she had strange visions; she seemed to see her husband and Madame Merle in dim, indistinguishable combination. It seemed to her that she had not done with her; this lady had something in reserve. Isabel’s imagination applied itself actively to this elusive point, but every now and then it was checked by a nameless dread, so that when her brilliant friend was away from Rome she had almost a consciousness of respite. She had already learned

from Miss Stackpole that Caspar Goodwood was in Europe, Henrietta having written to inform her of this fact immediately after meeting him in Paris. He himself never wrote to Isabel, and though he was in Europe she thought it very possible he might not desire to see her. Their last interview, before her marriage, had had quite the character of a complete rupture; if she remembered rightly he had said he wished to take his last look at her. Since then he had been the most inharmonious survival of her earlier time—the only one, in fact, with which a permanent pain was associated. He left her, that morning, with the sense of an unnecessary shock; it was like a collision between vessels in broad daylight. There had been no mist, no hidden current to excuse it, and she herself had only wished to steer skilfully. He had bumped against her prow, however, while her hand was on the tiller, and—to complete the metaphor—had given the lighter vessel a strain which still occasionally betrayed itself in a faint creaking. It had been painful to see him, because he represented the only serious harm that (to her belief) she had ever done in the world; he was the only person with an unsatisfied claim upon her. She had made him unhappy; she couldn't help it; and his unhappiness was a great reality. She cried with rage, after he had left her, at—she hardly knew what: she tried to think it was at his want of consideration. He had come to her with his unhappiness when her own bliss was so perfect; he had done his best to darken the brightness of these pure rays. He had not been violent, and yet there was a violence in that. There was a violence at any rate in something, somewhere; perhaps

it was only in her own fit of weeping and that after-sense of it which lasted for three or four days. The effect of Caspar Goodwood's visit faded away, and during the first year of Isabel's marriage he dropped out of her books. He was a thankless subject of reference; it was disagreeable to have to think of a person who was unhappy on your account and whom you could do nothing to relieve. It would have been different if she had been able to doubt, even a little, of his unhappiness, as she doubted of Lord Warburton's; unfortunately it was beyond question, and this aggressive, uncompromising look of it was just what made it unattractive. She could never say to herself that Caspar Goodwood had great compensations, as she was able to say in the case of her English suitor. She had no faith in his compensations, and no esteem for them. A cotton-factory was not a compensation for anything—least of all for having failed to marry Isabel Archer. And yet, beyond that, she hardly knew what he had—save of course his intrinsic qualities. Oh, he was intrinsic enough; she never thought of his even looking for artificial aids. If he extended his business—that, to the best of her belief, was the only form exertion could take with him—it would be because it was an enterprising thing, or good for the business; not in the least because he might hope it would overlay the past. This gave his figure a kind of bareness and bleakness which made the accident of meeting it in one's meditations always a sort of shock; it was deficient in the social drapery which muffles the sharpness of human contact. His perfect silence, moreover, the fact that she never heard from him and very seldom heard any

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mention of him, deepened this impression of his loneliness. She asked Lily for news of him, from time to time; but Lily knew nothing about Boston; her imagination was confined within the limits of Manhattan. As time went on Isabel thought of him oftener, and with fewer restrictions; she had more than once the idea of writing to him. She had never told her husband about him—never let Osmond know of his visits to her in Florence; a reserve not dictated in the early period by a want of confidence in Osmond, but simply by the consideration that Caspar Goodwood's disappointment was not her secret but his own. It would be wrong of her, she believed, to convey it to another, and Mr. Goodwood's affairs could have, after all, but little interest for Gilbert. When it came to the point she never wrote to him; it seemed to her that, considering his grievance, the least she could do was to let him alone. Nevertheless she would have been glad to be in some way nearer to him. It was not that it ever occurred to her that she might have married him; even after the consequences of her marriage became vivid to her, that particular reflection, though she indulged in so many, had not the assurance to present itself. But when she found herself in trouble he became a member of that circle of things with which she wished to set herself right. I have related how passionately she desired to feel that her unhappiness should not have come to her through her own fault. She had no near prospect of dying, and yet she wished to make her peace with the world—to put her spiritual affairs in order. It came back to her from time to time that there was an account still to be settled with Caspar Goodwood; it seemed

to her that she would settle it to-day on terms easy for him. Still, when she learned that he was coming to Rome she felt afraid; it would be more disagreeable for him than for any one else to learn that she was unhappy. Deep in her breast she believed that he had invested his all in her happiness, while the others had invested only a part. He was one more person from whom she should have to conceal her misery. She was reassured, however, after he arrived in Rome, for he spent several days without coming to see her.

Henrietta Stackpole, it may well be imagined, was much more punctual, and Isabel was largely favoured with the society of her friend. She threw herself into it, for now that she had made such a point of keeping her conscience clear, that was one way of proving that she had not been superficial—the more so that the years, in their flight, had rather enriched than blighted those peculiarities which had been humorously criticised by persons less interested than Isabel and were striking enough to give friendship a spice of heroism. Henrietta was as keen and quick and fresh as ever, and as neat and bright and fair. Her eye had lost none of its serenity, her toilet none of its crispness, her opinions none of their national flavour. She was by no means quite unchanged, however; it seemed to Isabel that she had grown restless. Of old she had never been restless; though she was perpetually in motion it was impossible to be more deliberate. She had a reason for everything she did; she fairly bristled with motives. Formerly, when she came to Europe it was because she wished to see it, but now, having already seen it, she had no such ex-

cuse. She did not for a moment pretend that the desire to examine decaying civilisations had anything to do with her present enterprise; her journey was rather an expression of her independence of the old world than of a sense of further obligations to it. "It's nothing to come to Europe," she said to Isabel; "it doesn't seem to me one needs so many reasons for that. It is something to stay at home; this is much more important." It was not therefore with a sense of doing anything very important that she treated herself to another pilgrimage to Rome; she had seen the place before and carefully inspected it; the actual episode was simply a sign of familiarity, of one's knowing all about it, of one's having as good a right as any one else to be there. This was all very well, and Henrietta was restless; she had a perfect right to be restless, too, if one came to that. But she had after all a better reason for coming to Rome than that she cared for it so little. Isabel easily recognised it, and with it the worth of her friend's fidelity. She had crossed the stormy ocean in midwinter because she guessed that Isabel was sad. Henrietta guessed a great deal, but she had never guessed so happily as that. Isabel's satisfactions just now were few, but even if they had been more numerous, there would still have been something of individual joy in her sense of being justified in having always thought highly of Henrietta. She had made large concessions with regard to her, but she had insisted that, with all abatements, she was very valuable. It was not her own triumph, however, that Isabel found good; it was simply the relief of confessing to Henrietta, the first person to whom she had owned it, that she was not

contented. Henrietta had herself approached this point with the smallest possible delay, and had accused her to her face of being miserable. She was a woman, she was a sister; she was not Ralph, nor Lord Warburton, nor Caspar Goodwood, and Isabel could speak.

"Yes, I am miserable," she said, very gently. She hated to hear herself say it; she tried to say it as judicially as possible.

"What does he do to you?" Henrietta asked, frowning as if she were inquiring into the operations of a quack doctor.

"He does nothing. But he doesn't like me."

"He's very difficult!" cried Miss Stackpole. "Why don't you leave him?"

"I can't change, that way," Isabel said.

"Why not, I should like to know? You won't confess that you have made a mistake. You are too proud."

"I don't know whether I am too proud. But I can't publish my mistake. I don't think that's decent. I would much rather die."

"You won't think so always, said Henrietta.

"I don't know what great unhappiness might bring me to; but it seems to me I shall always be ashamed. One must accept one's deeds. I married him before all the world; I was perfectly free; it was impossible to do anything more deliberate. One can't change, that way," Isabel repeated.

"You have changed, in spite of the impossibility. I hope you don't mean to say that you like him."

Isabel hesitated a moment. "No, I don't like him. I can tell you, because I am weary of my secret. But that's enough; I can't tell all the world."

Henrietta gave a rich laugh. "Don't you think you are rather too considerate?"

"It's not of him that I am considerate—it's of myself!" Isabel answered.

It was not surprising that Gilbert Osmond should not have taken comfort in Miss Stackpole; his instinct had naturally set him in opposition to a young lady capable of advising his wife to withdraw from the conjugal mansion. When she arrived in Rome he said to Isabel that he hoped she would leave her friend the interviewer, alone; and Isabel answered that he at least had nothing to fear from her. She said to Henrietta that as Osmond didn't like her she could not invite her to dine; but they could easily see each other in other ways. Isabel received Miss Stackpole freely in her own sitting-room, and took her repeatedly to drive, face to face with Pansy, who, bending a little forward, on the opposite seat of the carriage, gazed at the celebrated authoress with a respectful attention which Henrietta occasionally found irritating. She complained to Isabel that Miss Osmond had a little look as if she should remember everything one said. "I don't want to be remembered that way," Miss Stackpole declared; "I consider that my conversation refers only to the moment, like the morning papers. Your step-daughter, as she sits there, looks as if she kept all the back numbers and would bring them out some day against me." She could not bring herself to think favourably of Pansy, whose absence of initiative, of conversation, of personal claims, seemed to her, in a girl of twenty, unnatural and even sinister. Isabel presently saw that Osmond would have liked her to urge a little the cause of her friend,

insist a little upon his receiving her, so that he might appear to suffer for good manners' sake. Her immediate acceptance of his objections put him too much in the wrong—it being in effect one of the disadvantages of expressing contempt, that you cannot enjoy at the same time the credit of expressing sympathy. Osmond held to his credit, and yet he held to his objections—all of which were elements difficult to reconcile. The right thing would have been that Miss Stackpole should come to dine at the Palazzo Roccanera once or twice, so that (in spite of his superficial civility, always so great) she might judge for herself how little pleasure it gave him. From the moment, however, that both the ladies were so unaccommodating, there was nothing for Osmond but to wish that Henrietta would take herself off. It was surprising how little satisfaction he got from his wife's friends; he took occasion to call Isabel's attention to it.

“You are certainly not fortunate in your intimates; I wish you might make a new collection,” he said to her one morning, in reference to nothing visible at the moment, but in a tone of ripe reflection which deprived the remark of all brutal abruptness. “It's as if you had taken the trouble to pick out the people in the world that I have least in common with. Your cousin I have always thought a conceited ass—besides his being the most ill-favoured animal I know. Then it's insufferably tiresome that one can't tell him so; one must spare him on account of his health. His health seems to me the best part of him; it gives him privileges enjoyed by no one else. If he is so desperately ill there is only one way to prove it; but

he seems to have no mind for that. I can't say much more for the great Warburton. When one really thinks of it, the cool insolence of that performance was something rare! He comes and looks at one's daughter as if she were a suite of apartments; he tries the door-handles and looks out of the windows, raps on the walls and almost thinks he will take the place. Will you be so good as to draw up a lease? Then, on the whole, he decides that the rooms are too small; he doesn't think he could live on a third floor; he must look out for a *piano nobile*. And he goes away, after having got a month's lodging in the poor little apartment for nothing. Miss Stackpole, however, is your most wonderful invention. She strikes me as a kind of monster. One hasn't a nerve in one's body that she doesn't set quivering. You know I never have admitted that she is a woman. Do you know what she reminds me of? Of a new steel pen—the most odious thing in nature. She talks as a steel pen writes; aren't her letters, by the way, on ruled paper? She thinks and moves, and walks and looks, exactly as she talks. You may say that she doesn't hurt me, inasmuch as I don't see her. I don't see her, but I hear her; I hear her all day long. Her voice is in my ears; I can't get rid of it. I know exactly what she says, and every inflection of the tone in which she says it. She says charming things about me, and they give you great comfort. I don't like at all to think she talks about me—I feel as I should feel if I knew the footman were wearing my hat!”

Henrietta talked about Gilbert Osmond, as his wife assured him, rather less than he suspected. She

had plenty of other subjects, in two of which the reader may be supposed to be especially interested. She let Isabel know that Caspar Goodwood had discovered for himself that she was unhappy, though indeed her ingenuity was unable to suggest what comfort he hoped to give her by coming to Rome and yet not calling on her. They met him twice in the street, but he had no appearance of seeing them; they were driving, and he had a habit of looking straight in front of him, as if he proposed to contemplate but one object at a time. Isabel could have fancied she had seen him the day before; it must have been with just that face and step that he walked out of Mrs. Touchett's door at the close of their last interview. He was dressed just as he had been dressed on that day; Isabel remembered the colour of his cravat; and yet in spite of this familiar look there was a strangeness in his figure too; something that made her feel afresh that it was rather terrible he should have come to Rome. He looked bigger and more over-topping than of old, and in those days he certainly was lofty enough. She noticed that the people whom he passed looked back after him; but he went straight forward, lifting above them a face like a February sky.

Miss Stackpole's other topic was very different; she gave Isabel the latest news about Mr. Bantling. He had been out in the United States the year before, and she was happy to say she had been able to show him considerable attention. She didn't know how much he had enjoyed it, but she would undertake to say it had done him good; he wasn't the same man when he left that he was when he came. It had

opened his eyes and shown him that England was not everything. He was very much liked over there, and thought extremely simple—more simple than the English were commonly supposed to be. There were some people thought him affected; she didn't know whether they meant that his simplicity was an affectation. Some of his questions were too discouraging; he thought all the chamber-maids were farmers' daughters—or all the farmers' daughters were chamber-maids—she couldn't exactly remember which. He hadn't seemed able to grasp the school-system; it seemed really too much for him. On the whole he had appeared as if there were too much—as if he could only take a small part. The part he had chosen was the hotel-system, and the river-navigation. He seemed really fascinated with the hotels; he had a photograph of every one he had visited. But the river-steamers were his principal interest; he wanted to do nothing but sail on the big boats. They had travelled together from New York to Milwaukee, stopping at the most interesting cities on the route; and whenever they started afresh he had wanted to know if they could go by the steamer. He seemed to have no idea of geography—had an impression that Baltimore was a western city, and was perpetually expecting to arrive at the Mississippi. He appeared never to have heard of any river in America but the Mississippi, and was unprepared to recognise the existence of the Hudson, though he was obliged to confess at last that it was fully equal to the Rhine. They had spent some pleasant hours in the palace-cars; he was always ordering ice-cream from the coloured man. He could never get used to that idea—that you could get ice-

cream in the cars. Of course you couldn't, nor fans, nor candy, nor anything in the English cars! He found the heat quite overwhelming, and she had told him that she expected it was the greatest he had ever experienced. He was now in England, hunting—"hunting round," Henrietta called it. These amusements were those of the American red men; we had left that behind long ago, the pleasures of the chase. It seemed to be generally believed in England that we wore tomahawks and feathers; but such a costume was more in keeping with English habits. Mr. Bantling would not have time to join her in Italy, but when she should go to Paris again he expected to come over. He wanted very much to see Versailles again; he was very fond of the ancient *régime*. They didn't agree about that, but that was what she liked Versailles for, that you could see the ancient *régime* had been swept away. There were no dukes and marquises there now; on the contrary, she remembered one day when there were five American families, all walking round. Mr. Bantling was very anxious that she should take up the subject of England again, and he thought she might get on better with it now; England had changed a good deal within two or three years. He was determined that if she went there he should go to see his sister, Lady Pensil, and that this time the invitation should come to her straight. The mystery of that other one had never been explained.

Caspar Goodwood came at last to the Palazzo Roccanera; he had written Isabel a note beforehand, to ask leave. This was promptly granted; she would be at home at six o'clock that afternoon. She spent the day wondering what he was coming for—what

good he expected to get of it. He had presented himself hitherto as a person destitute of the faculty of compromise, who would take what he had asked for or nothing. Isabel's hospitality, however, asked no questions, and she found no great difficulty in appearing happy enough to deceive him. It was her conviction, at least, that she deceived him, and made him say to himself that he had been misinformed. But she also saw, so she believed, that he was not disappointed, as some other men, she was sure, would have been; he had not come to Rome to look for an opportunity. She never found out what he had come for; he offered her no explanation; there could be none but the very simple one that he wanted to see her. In other words, he had come for his amusement. Isabel followed up this induction with a good deal of eagerness, and was delighted to have found a formula that would lay the ghost of this gentleman's ancient grievance. If he had come to Rome for his amusement this was exactly what she wanted; for if he cared for amusement he had got over his heartache. If he had got over his heartache everything was as it should be, and her responsibilities were at an end. It was true that he took his recreation a little stiffly, but he had never been demonstrative, and Isabel had every reason to believe that he was satisfied with what he saw. Henrietta was not in his confidence, though he was in hers, and Isabel consequently received no side-light upon his state of mind. He had little conversation upon general topics; it came back to her that she had said of him once, years before—"Mr. Goodwood speaks a good deal, but he doesn't talk." He spoke a good deal in Rome,

but he talked, perhaps, as little as ever; considering, that is, how much there was to talk about. His arrival was not calculated to simplify her relations with her husband, for if Osmond didn't like her friends, Mr. Goodwood had no claim upon his attention save having been one of the first of them. There was nothing for her to say of him but that he was an old friend; this rather meagre synthesis exhausted the facts. She had been obliged to introduce him to Osmond; it was impossible she should not ask him to dinner, to her Thursday evenings, of which she had grown very weary, but to which her husband still held for the sake not so much of inviting people as of not inviting them. To the Thursdays Mr. Goodwood came regularly, solemnly, rather early; he appeared to regard them with a good deal of gravity. Isabel every now and then had a moment of anger; there was something so literal about him; she thought he might know that she didn't know what to do with him. But she couldn't call him stupid; he was not that in the least; he was only extraordinarily honest. To be as honest as that made a man very different from most people; one had to be almost equally honest with him. Isabel made this latter reflection at the very time she was flattering herself that she had persuaded him that she was the most light-hearted of women. He never threw any doubt on this point, never asked her any personal questions. He got on much better with Osmond than had seemed probable. Osmond had a great dislike to being counted upon; in such a case he had an irresistible need of disappointing you. It was in virtue of this principle that he gave himself the entertainment of taking a fancy to a

perpendicular Bostonian whom he had been depended upon to treat with coldness. He asked Isabel if Mr. Goodwood also had wanted to marry her, and expressed surprise at her not having accepted him. It would have been an excellent thing, like living under a tall belfry which would strike all the hours and make a queer vibration in the upper air. He declared he liked to talk with the great Goodwood; it wasn't easy at first, you had to climb up an interminable steep staircase up to the top of the tower; but when you got there you had a big view and felt a little fresh breeze. Osmond, as we know, had delightful qualities, and he gave Caspar Goodwood the benefit of them all. Isabel could see that Mr. Goodwood thought better of her husband than he had ever wished to; he had given her the impression that morning in Florence of being inaccessible to a good impression. Osmond asked him repeatedly to dinner, and Goodwood smoked a cigar with him afterwards, and even desired to be shown his collections. Osmond said to Isabel that he was very original; he was as strong as an English portmanteau. Caspar Goodwood took to riding on the Campagna, and devoted much time to this exercise; it was therefore mainly in the evening that Isabel saw him. She bethought herself of saying to him one day that if he were willing he could render her a service. And then she added smiling—

“I don't know, however, what right I have to ask a service of you.”

“You are the person in the world who has most right,” he answered. “I have given you assurances that I have never given any one else.”

The service was that he should go and see her cousin Ralph, who was ill at the Hôtel de Paris, alone, and be as kind to him as possible. Mr. Goodwood had never seen him, but he would know who the poor fellow was; if she was not mistaken, Ralph had once invited him to Gardencourt. Caspar remembered the invitation perfectly, and, though he was not supposed to be a man of imagination, had enough to put himself in the place of a poor gentleman who lay dying at a Roman inn. He called at the Hôtel de Paris, and on being shown into the presence of the master of Gardencourt, found Miss Stackpole sitting beside his sofa. A singular change had, in fact, occurred in this lady's relations with Ralph Touchett. She had not been asked by Isabel to go and see him, but on hearing that he was too ill to come out had immediately gone of her own motion. After this she had paid him a daily visit—always under the conviction that they were great enemies. "Oh yes, we are intimate enemies," Ralph used to say; and he accused her freely—as freely as the humour of it would allow—of coming to worry him to death. In reality they became excellent friends, and Henrietta wondered that she should never have liked him before. Ralph liked her exactly as much as he had always done; he had never doubted for a moment that she was an excellent fellow. They talked about everything, and always differed; about everything, that is, but Isabel—a topic as to which Ralph always had a thin forefinger on his lips. On the other hand, Mr. Bantling was a great resource; Ralph was capable of discussing Mr. Bantling with Henrietta for hours. Discussion was stimulated of course by their inevitable difference of view—Ralph having amused himself with

taking the ground that the genial ex-guardsman was a regular Machiavelli. Casper Goodwood could contribute nothing to such a debate; but after he had been left alone with Touchett, he found there were various other matters they could talk about. It must be admitted that the lady who had just gone out was not one of these; Caspar granted all Miss Stackpole's merits in advance, but had no further remark to make about her. Neither, after the first allusions, did the two men expatiate upon Mrs. Osmond—a theme in which Goodwood perceived as many dangers as his host. He felt very sorry for Ralph; he couldn't bear to see a pleasant man so helpless. There was help in Goodwood, when once the fountain had been tapped; and he repeated several times his visit to the Hôtel de Paris. It seemed to Isabel that she had been very clever; she had disposed of the superfluous Caspar. She had given him an occupation; she had converted him into a care-taker of Ralph. She had a plan of making him travel northward with her cousin as soon as the first mild weather should allow it. Lord Warburton had brought Ralph to Rome, and Mr. Goodwood should take him away. There seemed a happy symmetry in this, and she was now intensely eager that Ralph should leave Rome. She had a constant fear that he would die there, and a horror of this event occurring at an inn, at her door, which she had so rarely entered. Ralph must sink to his last rest in his own dear house, in one of those deep, dim chambers of Gardencourt, where the dark ivy would cluster round the edges of the glimmering window. There seemed to Isabel in these days something sacred about Gardencourt; no chapter of the past was more perfectly irrecoverable. When she thought

of the months she had spent there the tears rose to her eyes. She flattered herself, as I say, upon her ingenuity, but she had need of all she could muster; for several events occurred which seemed to confront and defy her. The Countess Gemini arrived from Florence—arrived with her trunks, her dresses, her chatter, her little fibs, her frivolity, the strange memory of her lovers. Edward Rosier, who had been away somewhere—no one, not even Pansy, knew where—reappeared in Rome and began to write her long letters, which she never answered. Madame Merle returned from Naples and said to her with a strange smile—"What on earth did you do with Lord Warburton?" As if it were any business of hers!

IX.

ONE day, toward the end of February, Ralph Touchett made up his mind to return to England. He had his own reasons for this decision, which he was not bound to communicate; but Henrietta Stackpole, to whom he mentioned his intention, flattered herself that she guessed them. She forbore to express them, however; she only said, after a moment, as she sat by his sofa—

"I suppose you know that you can't go alone?"

"I have no idea of doing that," Ralph answered.

"I shall have people with me."

"What do you mean by 'people'? Servants, whom you pay?"

"Ah," said Ralph, jocosely, "after all, they are human beings."

"Are there any women among them?" Miss Stackpole inquired, calmly.

"You speak as if I had a dozen! No, I confess I haven't a soubrette in my employment."

"Well," said Henrietta, tranquilly, "you can't go to England that way. You must have a woman's care."

"I have had so much of yours for the past fortnight that it will last me a good while."

"You have not had enough of it yet. I guess I will go with you," said Henrietta.

"Go with me?" Ralph slowly raised himself from his sofa.

"Yes, I know you don't like me, but I will go with you all the same. It would be better for your health to lie down again."

Ralph looked at her a little; then he slowly resumed his former posture.

"I like you very much," he said in a moment.

Miss Stackpole gave one of her infrequent laughs.

"You needn't think that by saying that you can buy me off. I will go with you, and what is more I will take care of you."

"You are a very good woman," said Ralph.

"Wait till I get you safely home before you say that. It won't be easy. But you had better go, all the same."

Before she left him, Ralph said to her—

"Do you really mean to take care of me?"

"Well, I mean to try."

"I notify you, then, that I submit. Oh, I submit!" And it was perhaps a sign of submission that a few minutes after she had left him alone he burst into a loud fit of laughter. It seemed to him so inconsequent,

such a conclusive proof of his having abdicated all functions and renounced all exercise, that he should start on a journey across Europe under the supervision of Miss Stackpole. And the great oddity was that the prospect pleased him; he was gratefully, luxuriously passive. He felt even impatient to start; and indeed he had an immense longing to see his own house again. The end of everything was at hand; it seemed to him that he could stretch out his arm and touch the goal. But he wished to die at home; it was the only wish he had left—to extend himself in the large quiet room where he had last seen his father lie, and close his eyes upon the summer dawn.

That same day Caspar Goodwood came to see him, and he informed his visitor that Miss Stackpole had taken him up and was to conduct him back to England.

“Ah then,” said Caspar, “I am afraid I shall be a fifth wheel to the coach. Mrs. Osmond has made *me* promise to go with you.”

“Good heavens—it’s the golden age! You are all too kind.”

“The kindness on my part is to her; it’s hardly to you.”

“Granting that, *she* is kind,” said Ralph, smiling.

“To get people to go with you? Yes, that’s a sort of kindness,” Goodwood answered, without lending himself to the joke. “For myself, however,” he added, “I will go so far as to say that I would much rather travel with you and Miss Stackpole than with Miss Stackpole alone.”

“And you would rather stay here than do either,”

said Ralph. "There is really no need of your coming. Henrietta is extraordinarily efficient."

"I am sure of that. But I have promised Mrs. Osmond."

"You can easily get her to let you off."

"She wouldn't let me off for the world. She wants me to look after you, but that isn't the principal thing. The principal thing is that she wants me to leave Rome."

"Ah, you see too much in it," Ralph suggested.

"I bore her," Goodwood went on; "she has nothing to say to me, so she invented that."

"Oh then, if it's a convenience to her, I certainly will take you with me. Though I don't see why it should be a convenience," Ralph added in a moment.

"Well," said Caspar Goodwood, simply, "she thinks I am watching her."

"Watching her?"

"Trying to see whether she's happy."

"That's easy to see," said Ralph. "She's the most visibly happy woman I know."

"Exactly so; I am satisfied," Goodwood answered, dryly. For all his dryness, however, he had more to say. "I have been watching her; I was an old friend, and it seemed to me I had the right. She pretends to be happy; that was what she undertook to be; and I thought I should like to see for myself what it amounts to. I have seen," he continued, in a strange voice, "and I don't want to see any more. I am now quite ready to go."

"Do you know it strikes me as about time you should?" Ralph rejoined. And this was the only conversation these gentlemen had about Isabel Osmond.

Henrietta made her preparations for departure, and among them she found it proper to say a few words to the Countess Gemini, who returned at Miss Stackpole's *pension* the visit which this lady had paid her in Florence.

"You were very wrong about Lord Warburton," she remarked, to the Countess. "I think it is right you should know that."

"About his making love to Isabel? My poor lady, he was at her house three times a day. He has left traces of his passage!" the Countess cried.

"He wished to marry your niece; that's why he came to the house."

The Countess stared, and then gave an inconsiderate laugh.

"Is that the story that Isabel tells? It isn't bad, as such things go. If he wishes to marry my niece, pray why doesn't he do it? Perhaps he has gone to buy the wedding-ring, and will come back with it next month, after I am gone."

"No, he will not come back. Miss Osmond doesn't wish to marry him."

"She is very accommodating! I knew she was fond of Isabel, but I didn't know she carried it so far."

"I don't understand you," said Henrietta, coldly, and reflecting that the Countess was unpleasantly perverse. "I really must stick to my point—that Isabel never encouraged the attentions of Lord Warburton."

"My dear friend, what do you and I know about it? All we know is that my brother is capable of everything."

"I don't know what he is capable of," said Henrietta, with dignity.

"It's not her encouraging Lord Warburton that I complain of; it's her sending him away. I want particularly to see him. Do you suppose she thought I would make him faithless?" the Countess continued, with audacious insistence. "However, she is only keeping him, one can feel that. The house is full of him there; he is quite in the air. Oh yes, he has left traces; I am sure I shall see him yet."

"Well," said Henrietta, after a little, with one of those inspirations which had made the fortune of her letters to the *Interviewer*, "perhaps he will be more successful with you than with Isabel!"

When she told her friend of the offer she had made to Ralph, Isabel replied that she could have done nothing that would have pleased her more. It had always been her faith that, at bottom, Ralph and Henrietta were made to understand each other.

"I don't care whether he understands me or not," said Henrietta. "The great thing is that he shouldn't die in the cars."

"He won't do that," Isabel said, shaking her head, with an extension of faith.

"He won't if I can help it. I see you want us all to go. I don't know what you want to do."

"I want to be alone," said Isabel.

"You won't be that so long as you have got so much company at home."

"Ah, they are part of the comedy. You others are spectators."

"Do you call it a comedy, Isabel Archer?" Henrietta inquired, severely.

"The tragedy, then, if you like. You are all looking at me; it makes me uncomfortable."

Henrietta contemplated her a while.

"You are like the stricken deer, seeking the innermost shade. Oh, you do give me such a sense of helplessness!" she broke out.

"I am not at all helpless. There are many things I mean to do."

"It's not you I am speaking of; it's myself. It's too much, having come on purpose, to leave you just as I find you."

"You don't do that; you leave me much refreshed," Isabel said.

"Very mild refreshment—sour lemonade! I want you to promise me something."

"I can't do that. I shall never make another promise. I made such a solemn one four years ago, and I have succeeded so ill in keeping it."

"You have had no encouragement. In this case I should give you the greatest. Leave your husband before the worst comes; that's what I want you to promise."

"The worst? What do you call the worst?"

"Before your character gets spoiled."

"Do you mean my disposition? It won't get spoiled," Isabel answered, smiling. "I am taking very good care of it. I am extremely struck," she added, turning away, "with the off-hand way in which you speak of a woman leaving her husband. It's easy to see you have never had one!"

"Well," said Henrietta, as if she were beginning an argument, "nothing is more common in our western cities, and it is to them, after all, that we must look in the future." Her argument, however, does not concern this history, which has too many other threads

to unwind. She announced to Ralph Touchett that she was ready to leave Rome by any train that he might designate, and Ralph immediately pulled himself together for departure. Isabel went to see him at the last, and he made the same remark that Henrietta had made. It struck him that Isabel was uncommonly glad to get rid of them all.

For all answer to this she gently laid her hand on his, and said in a low tone, with a quick smile—

“My dear Ralph!”

It was answer enough, and he was quite contented. But he went on, in the same way, jocosely, ingenuously—“I’ve seen less of you than I might, but it’s better than nothing. And then I have heard a great deal about you.”

“I don’t know from whom, leading the life you have done.”

“From the voices of the air! Oh, from no one else; I never let other people speak of you. They always say you are ‘charming,’ and that’s so flat.”

“I might have seen more of you, certainly,” Isabel said. “But when one is married one has so much occupation.”

“Fortunately I am not married. When you come to see me in England, I shall be able to entertain you with all the freedom of a bachelor.” He continued to talk as if they should certainly meet again, and succeeded in making the assumption appear almost just. He made no allusion to his term being near, to the probability that he should not outlast the summer. If he preferred it so, Isabel was willing enough; the reality was sufficiently distinct, without their erecting finger-posts in conversation. That had been well

enough for the earlier time, though about this as about his other affairs Ralph had never been egotistic. Isabel spoke of his journey, of the stages into which he should divide it, of the precautions he should take.

"Henrietta is my greatest precaution," Ralph said. "The conscience of that woman is sublime."

"Certainly, she will be very conscientious."

"Will be? She has been! It's only because she thinks it's her duty that she goes with me. There's a conception of duty for you."

"Yes, it's a generous one," said Isabel, "and it makes me deeply ashamed. I ought to go with you, you know."

"Your husband wouldn't like that."

"No, he wouldn't like it. But I might go, all the same."

"I am startled by the boldness of your imagination. Fancy my being a cause of disagreement between a lady and her husband!"

"That's why I don't go," said Isabel, simply, but not very lucidly.

Ralph understood well enough, however. "I should think so, with all those occupations you speak of."

"It isn't that. I am afraid," said Isabel. After a pause she repeated, as if to make herself, rather than him, hear the words—"I am afraid."

Ralph could hardly tell what her tone meant; it was so strangely deliberate—apparently so void of emotion. Did she wish to do public penance for a fault of which she had not been convicted? or were her words simply an attempt at enlightened self-analysis? However this might be, Ralph could not

resist so easy an opportunity. "Afraid of your husband?" he said, jocosely.

"Afraid of myself!" said Isabel, getting up. She stood there a moment, and then she added—"If I were afraid of my husband, that would be simply my duty. That is what women are expected to be."

"Ah, yes," said Ralph, laughing; "but to make up for it there is always some man awfully afraid of some woman!"

She gave no heed to this pleasantry, but suddenly took a different turn. "With Henrietta at the head of your little band," she exclaimed abruptly, "there will be nothing left for Mr. Goodwood!"

"Ah, my dear Isabel," Ralph answered, "he's used to that. There is nothing left for Mr. Goodwood!"

Isabel coloured, and then she declared, quickly, that she must leave him. They stood together a moment; both her hands were in both of his. "You have been my best friend," she said.

"It was for you that I wanted—that I wanted to live. But I am of no use to you."

Then it came over her more poignantly that she should not see him again. She could not accept that; she could not part with him that way. "If you should send for me I would come," she said at last.

"Your husband won't consent to that."

"Oh yes, I can arrange it."

"I shall keep that for my last pleasure!" said Ralph.

In answer to which she simply kissed him.

It was a Thursday, and that evening Caspar Goodwood came to the Palazzo Roccanera. He was among

the first to arrive, and he spent some time in conversation with Gilbert Osmond, who almost always was present when his wife received. They sat down together, and Osmond, talkative, communicative, expansive, seemed possessed with a kind of intellectual gaiety. He leaned back with his legs crossed, lounging and chatting, while Goodwood, more restless, but not at all lively, shifted his position, played with his hat, made the little sofa creak beneath him. Osmond's face wore a sharp, aggressive smile; he was like a man whose perceptions had been quickened by good news. He remarked to Goodwood that he was very sorry they were to lose him; he himself should particularly miss him. He saw so few intelligent men—they were surprisingly scarce in Rome. He must be sure to come back; there was something very refreshing, to an inveterate Italian like himself, in talking with a genuine outsider.

"I am very fond of Rome, you know," Osmond said; "but there is nothing I like better than to meet people who haven't that superstition. The modern world is after all very fine. Now you are thoroughly modern, and yet you are not at all flimsy. So many of the moderns we see are such very poor stuff. If they are the children of the future we are willing to die young. Of course the ancients too are often very tiresome. My wife and I like everything that is really new—not the mere pretence of it. There is nothing new, unfortunately, in ignorance and stupidity. We see plenty of that in forms that offer themselves as a revelation of progress, of light. A revelation of vulgarity! There is a certain kind of vulgarity which I believe is really new; I don't think there ever was

anything like it before. Indeed I don't find vulgarity, at all, before the present century. You see a faint menace of it here and there in the last, but to-day the air has grown so dense that delicate things are literally not recognised. Now, we have liked you——” And Osmond hesitated a moment, laying his hand gently on Goodwood's knee and smiling with a mixture of assurance and embarrassment. “I am going to say something extremely offensive and patronising, but you must let me have the satisfaction of it. We have liked you because—because you have reconciled us a little to the future. If there are to be a certain number of people like you—*à la bonne heure!* I am talking for my wife as well as for myself, you see. She speaks for me; why shouldn't I speak for her? We are as united, you know, as the candlestick and the snuffers. Am I assuming too much when I say that I think I have understood from you that your occupations have been—a—commercial? There is a danger in that, you know; but it's the way you have escaped that strikes us. Excuse me if my little compliment seems in execrable taste; fortunately my wife doesn't hear me. What I mean is that you *might have been*—a—what I was mentioning just now. The whole American world was in a conspiracy to make you so. But you resisted, you have something that saved you. And yet you are so modern, so modern; the most modern man we know! We shall always be delighted to see you again.”

I have said that Osmond was in good-humour, and these remarks will give ample evidence of the fact. They were infinitely more personal than he usually cared to be, and if Caspar Goodwood had attended

to them more closely he might have thought that the defence of delicacy was in rather odd hands. We may believe, however, that Osmond knew very well what he was about, and that if he chose for once to be a little vulgar, he had an excellent reason for the escapade. Goodwood had only a vague sense that he was laying it on, somehow; he scarcely knew where the mixture was applied. Indeed he scarcely knew what Osmond was talking about; he wanted to be alone with Isabel, and that idea spoke louder to him than her husband's perfectly modulated voice. He watched her talking with other people, and wondered when she would be at liberty, and whether he might ask her to go into one of the other rooms. His humour was not, like Osmond's, of the best; there was an element of dull rage in his consciousness of things. Up to this time he had not disliked Osmond personally; he had only thought him very well-informed and obliging, and more than he had supposed like the person whom Isabel Archer would naturally marry. Osmond had won in the open field a great advantage over him, and Goodwood had too strong a sense of fair play to have been moved to underrate him on that account. He had not tried positively to like him; this was a flight of sentimental benevolence of which, even in the days when he came nearest to reconciling himself to what had happened, Goodwood was quite incapable. He accepted him as a rather brilliant personage of the amateurish kind, afflicted with a redundancy of leisure which it amused him to work off in little refinements of conversation. But he only half trusted him; he could never make out why the deuce Osmond should lavish refinements of any sort

upon *him*. It made him suspect that he found some private entertainment in it, and it ministered to a general impression that his successful rival had a fantastic streak in his composition. He knew indeed that Osmond could have no reason to wish him evil; he had nothing to fear from him. He had carried off a supreme advantage, and he could afford to be kind to a man who had lost everything. It was true that Goodwood at times had wished Osmond were dead, and would have liked to kill him; but Osmond had no means of knowing this, for practice had made Goodwood quite perfect in the art of appearing inaccessible to-day to any violent emotion. He cultivated this art in order to deceive himself, but it was others that he deceived first. He cultivated it, moreover, with very limited success; of which there could be no better proof than the deep, dumb irritation that reigned in his soul when he heard Osmond speak of his wife's feelings as if he were commissioned to answer for them. That was all he had an ear for in what his host said to him this evening; he was conscious that Osmond made more of a point even than usual of referring to the conjugal harmony which prevailed at the Palazzo Roccanera. He was more careful than ever to speak as if he and his wife had all things in sweet community, and it were as natural to each of them to say "we" as to say "I." In all this there was an air of intention which puzzled and angered our poor Bostonian, who could only reflect for his comfort that Mrs. Osmond's relations with her husband were none of his business. He had no proof whatever that her husband misrepresented her, and if he judged her by the surface of things was bound to

believe that she liked her life. She had never given him the faintest sign of discontent. Miss Stackpole had told him that she had lost her illusions, but writing for the papers had made Miss Stackpole sensational. She was too fond of early news. Moreover, since her arrival in Rome she had been much on her guard; she had ceased to flash her lantern at him. This, indeed, it may be said for her, would have been quite against her conscience. She had now seen the reality of Isabel's situation, and it had inspired her with a just reserve. Whatever could be done to improve it, the most useful form of assistance would not be to inflame her former lovers with a sense of her wrongs. Miss Stackpole continued to take a deep interest in the state of Mr. Goodwood's feelings, but she showed it at present only by sending him choice extracts, humorous and other, from the American journals, of which she received several by every post and which she always perused with a pair of scissors in her hand. The articles she cut out she placed in an envelope addressed to Mr. Goodwood, which she left with her own hand at his hotel. He never asked her a question about Isabel; hadn't he come five thousand miles to see for himself? He was thus not in the least authorised to think Mrs. Osmond unhappy; but the very absence of authorisation operated as an irritant, ministered to the angry pain with which, in spite of his theory that he had ceased to care, he now recognised that, as far as she was concerned, the future had nothing more for him. He had not even the satisfaction of knowing the truth; apparently he could not even be trusted to respect her if she *were* unhappy. He was hopeless, he was helpless, he was

superfluous. To this last fact she had called his attention by her ingenious plan for making him leave Rome. He had no objection whatever to doing what he could for her cousin, but it made him grind his teeth to think that of all the services she might have asked of him this was the one she had been eager to select. There had been no danger of her choosing one that would have kept him in Rome!

To-night what he was chiefly thinking of was that he was to leave her to-morrow, and that he had gained nothing by coming but the knowledge that he was as superfluous as ever. About herself he had gained no knowledge; she was imperturbable, impenetrable. He felt the old bitterness, which he had tried so hard to swallow, rise again in his throat, and he knew that there are disappointments which last as long as life. Osmond went on talking; Goodwood was vaguely aware that he was touching again upon his perfect intimacy with his wife. It seemed to him for a moment that Osmond had a kind of demoniac imagination; it was impossible that without malice he should have selected so unusual a topic. But what did it matter, after all, whether he were demoniac or not, and whether she loved him or hated him? She might hate him to the death without Goodwood's gaining by it.

"You travel, by the by, with Touchett," Osmond said. "I suppose that means that you will move slowly?"

"I don't know; I shall do just as he likes."

"You are very accommodating. We are immensely obliged to you; you must really let me say it. My wife has probably expressed to you what we feel.

Touchett has been on our minds all winter; it has looked more than once as if he would never leave Rome. He ought never to have come; it's worse than an imprudence for people in that state to travel; it's a kind of indelicacy. I wouldn't for the world be under such an obligation to Touchett as he has been to—to my wife and me. Other people inevitably have to look after him, and every one isn't so generous as you."

"I have nothing else to do," said Caspar, dryly.

Osmond looked at him a moment, askance. "You ought to marry, and then you would have plenty to do! It is true that in that case you wouldn't be quite so available for deeds of mercy."

"Do you find that as a married man you are so much occupied?"

"Ah, you see, being married is in itself an occupation. It isn't always active; it's often passive; but that takes even more attention. Then my wife and I do so many things together. We read, we study, we make music, we walk, we drive—we talk even, as when we first knew each other. I delight, to this hour, in my wife's conversation. If you are ever bored, get married. Your wife indeed may bore you, in that case; but you will never bore yourself. You will always have something to say to yourself—always have a subject of reflection."

"I am not bored," said Goodwood. "I have plenty to think about and to say to myself."

"More than to say to others!" Osmond exclaimed, with a light laugh. "Where shall you go next? I mean after you have consigned Touchett to his natural care-takers—I believe his mother is at last coming back to look after him. That little lady is superb;

she neglects her duties with a finish! Perhaps you will spend the summer in England?"

"I don't know; I have no plans."

"Happy man! That's a little nude, but it's very free."

"Oh yes, I am very free."

"Free to come back to Rome, I hope," said Osmond, as he saw a group of new visitors enter the room. "Remember that when you do come we count upon you!"

Goodwood had meant to go away early, but the evening elapsed without his having a chance to speak to Isabel otherwise than as one of several associated interlocutors. There was something perverse in the inveteracy with which she avoided him; Goodwood's unquenchable rancour discovered an intention where there was certainly no appearance of one. There was absolutely no appearance of one. She met his eye with her sweet hospitable smile, which seemed almost to ask that he would come and help her to entertain some of her visitors. To such suggestions, however, he only opposed a stiff impatience. He wandered about and waited; he talked to the few people he knew, who found him for the first time rather self-contradictory. This was indeed rare with Caspar Goodwood, though he often contradicted others. There was often music at the Palazzo Roccanera, and it was usually very good. Under cover of the music he managed to contain himself; but toward the end, when he saw the people beginning to go, he drew near to Isabel and asked her in a low tone if he might not speak to her in one of the other rooms, which he had just assured himself was empty.

She smiled as if she wished to oblige him, but found herself absolutely prevented. "I'm afraid it's impossible. People are saying good-night, and I must be where they can see me."

"I shall wait till they are all gone, then!"

She hesitated a moment. "Ah, that will be delightful!" she exclaimed.

And he waited, though it took a long time yet. There were several people, at the end, who seemed tethered to the carpet. The Countess Gemini, who was never herself till midnight, as she said, displayed no consciousness that the entertainment was over; she had still a little circle of gentlemen in front of the fire, who every now and then broke into a united laugh. Osmond had disappeared—he never bade good-bye to people; and as the Countess was extending her range, according to her custom at this period of the evening, Isabel had sent Pansy to bed. Isabel sat a little apart; she too appeared to wish that her sister-in-law would sound a lower note and let the last loiterers depart in peace.

"May I not say a word to you now?" Goodwood presently asked her.

She got up immediately, smiling. "Certainly, we will go somewhere else, if you like."

They went together, leaving the Countess with her little circle, and for a moment after they had crossed the threshold neither of them spoke. Isabel would not sit down; she stood in the middle of the room slowly fanning herself, with the same familiar grace. She seemed to be waiting for him to speak. Now that he was alone with her, all the passion that he had never stifled surged into his senses; it hummed in his eyes

and made things swim around him. The bright, empty room grew dim and blurred, and through the rustling tissue he saw Isabel hover before him with gleaming eyes and parted lips. If he had seen more distinctly he would have perceived that her smile was fixed and a trifle forced—that she was frightened at what she saw in his own face.

“I suppose you wish to bid me good-bye?” she said.

“Yes—but I don’t like it. I don’t want to leave Rome,” he answered, with almost plaintive honesty.

“I can well imagine. It is wonderfully good of you. I can’t tell you how kind I think you.”

For a moment more he said nothing. “With a few words like that you make me go.”

“You must come back some day,” Isabel rejoined, brightly.

“Some day? You mean as long a time hence as possible.”

“Oh no; I don’t mean all that.”

“What *do* you mean? I don’t understand! But I said I would go, and I will go,” Goodwood added.

“Come back whenever you like,” said Isabel, with attempted lightness.

“I don’t care a straw for your cousin!” Caspar broke out.

“Is that what you wished to tell me?”

“No, no; I didn’t want to tell you anything; I wanted to ask you—” he paused a moment, and then —“what have you really made of your life?” he said, in a low, quick tone. He paused again, as if for an answer; but she said nothing, and he went on—“I can’t understand, I can’t penetrate you! What am I

to believe—what do you want me to think?” Still she said nothing; she only stood looking at him, now quite without pretending to smile. “I am told you are unhappy, and if you are I should like to know it. That would be something for me. But you yourself say you are happy, and you are somehow so still, so smooth. You are completely changed. You conceal everything; I haven’t really come near you.”

“You come very near,” Isabel said, gently, but in a tone of warning.

“And yet I don’t touch you! I want to know the truth. Have you done well?”

“You ask a great deal.”

“Yes—I have always asked a great deal. Of course you won’t tell me. I shall never know, if you can help it. And then it’s none of my business.” He had spoken with a visible effort to control himself, to give a considerate form to an inconsiderate state of mind. But the sense that it was his last chance, that he loved her and had lost her, that she would think him a fool whatever he should say, suddenly gave him a lash and added a deep vibration to his low voice. “You are perfectly inscrutable, and that’s what makes me think you have something to hide. I say that I don’t care a straw for your cousin, but I don’t mean that I don’t like him. I mean that it isn’t because I like him that I go away with him. I would go if he were an idiot, and you should have asked me. If you should ask me, I would go to Siberia to-morrow. Why do you want me to leave the place? You must have some reason for that; if you were as contented as you pretend you are, you wouldn’t care. I would rather know the truth about you, even if it’s

damnable, than have come here for nothing. That isn't what I came for. I thought I shouldn't care. I came because I wanted to assure myself that I needn't think of you any more. I haven't thought of anything else, and you are quite right to wish me to go away. But if I must go, there is no harm in my letting myself out for a single moment, is there? If you are really hurt—if *he* hurts you—nothing *I* say will hurt you. When I tell you I love you, it's simply what I came for. I thought it was for something else; but it was for that. I shouldn't say it if I didn't believe I should never see you again. It's the last time—let me pluck a single flower! I have no right to say that, I know; and you have no right to listen. But you don't listen; you never listen, you are always thinking of something else. After this I must go, of course; so I shall at least have a reason. Your asking me is no reason, not a real one. I can't judge by your husband," he went on, irrelevantly, almost incoherently, "I don't understand him; he tells me you adore each other. Why does he tell me that? What business is it of mine? When I say that to you, you look strange. But you always look strange. Yes, you have something to hide. It's none of my business—very true. But I love you," said Caspar Goodwood.

As he said, she looked strange. She turned her eyes to the door by which they had entered, and raised her fan as if in warning.

"You have behaved so well; don't spoil it," she said, softly.

"No one hears me. It's wonderful what you tried to put me off with. I love you as I have never loved you."

"I know it. I knew it as soon as you consented to go."

"You can't help it—of course not. You would if you could, but you can't, unfortunately. Unfortunately for me, I mean. I ask nothing—nothing, that is, that I shouldn't. But I do ask one sole satisfaction—that you tell me—that you tell me——"

"That I tell you what?"

"Whether I may pity you."

"Should you like that?" Isabel asked, trying to smile again.

"To pity you? Most assuredly! That at least would be doing something. I would give my life to it."

She raised her fan to her face, which it covered, all except her eyes. They rested a moment on his.

"Don't give your life to it; but give a thought to it every now and then."

And with that Isabel went back to the Countess Gemini.

X.

MADAME MERLE had not made her appearance at the Palazzo Roccanera on the evening of that Thursday of which I have narrated some of the incidents, and Isabel, though she observed her absence, was not surprised by it. Things had passed between them which added no stimulus to sociability, and to appreciate which we must glance a little backward. It has been mentioned that Madame Merle returned from Naples shortly after Lord Warburton had left.

Rome, and that on her first meeting with Isabel (whom, to do her justice, she came immediately to see) her first utterance was an inquiry as to the whereabouts of this nobleman, for whom she appeared to hold her dear friend accountable.

"Please don't talk of him," said Isabel, for answer; "we have heard so much of him of late."

Madame Merle bent her head on one side a little, protestingly, and smiled in the left corner of her mouth.

"You have heard, yes. But you must remember that I have not, in Naples. I hoped to find him here, and to be able to congratulate Pansy."

"You may congratulate Pansy still; but not on marrying Lord Warburton."

"How you say that! Don't you know I had set my heart on it?" Madame Merle asked, with a great deal of spirit, but still with the intonation of good-humour.

Isabel was discomposed, but she was determined to be good-humoured too.

"You shouldn't have gone to Naples, then. You should have stayed here to watch the affair."

"I had too much confidence in you. But do you think it is too late?"

"You had better ask Pansy," said Isabel.

"I shall ask her what you have said to her."

These words seemed to justify the impulse of self-defence aroused on Isabel's part by her perceiving that her visitor's attitude was a critical one. Madame Merle, as we know, had been very discreet hitherto; she had never criticised; she had been excessively afraid of intermeddling. But apparently she had only

reserved herself for this occasion; for she had a dangerous quickness in her eye, and an air of irritation which even her admirable smile was not able to transmute. She had suffered a disappointment which excited Isabel's surprise—our heroine having no knowledge of her zealous interest in Pansy's marriage; and she betrayed it in a manner which quickened Mrs. Osmond's alarm. More clearly than ever before, Isabel heard a cold, mocking voice proceed from she knew not where, in the dim void that surrounded her, and declare that this bright, strong, definite, worldly woman, this incarnation of the practical, the personal, the immediate, was a powerful agent in her destiny. She was nearer to her than Isabel had yet discovered, and her nearness was not the charming accident that she had so long thought. The sense of accident indeed had died within her that day when she happened to be struck with the manner in which Madame Merle and her own husband sat together in private. No definite suspicion had as yet taken its place; but it was enough to make her look at this lady with a different eye, to have been led to reflect that there was more intention in her past behaviour than she had allowed for at the time. Ah, yes, there had been intention, there had been intention, Isabel said to herself; and she seemed to wake from a long, pernicious dream. What was it that brought it home to her that Madame Merle's intention had not been good? Nothing but the mistrust which had lately taken body, and which married itself now to the fruitful wonder produced by her visitor's challenge on behalf of poor Pansy. There was something in this challenge which at the very outset excited an answering defiance; a

nameless vitality which Isabel now saw to have been absent from her friend's professions of delicacy and caution. Madame Merle had been unwilling to interfere, certainly, but only so long as there was nothing to interfere with. It will perhaps seem to the reader that Isabel went fast in casting doubt, on mere suspicion, on a sincerity proved by several years of good offices. She moved quickly, indeed, and with reason, for a strange truth was filtering into her soul. Madame Merle's interest was identical with Osmond's; that was enough.

"I think Pansy will tell you nothing that will make you more angry," she said, in answer to her companion's last remark.

"I am not in the least angry. I have only a great desire to retrieve the situation. Do you think his lordship has left us for ever?"

"I can't tell you; I don't understand you. It's all over; please let it rest. Osmond has talked to me a great deal about it, and I have nothing more to say or to hear. I have no doubt," Isabel added, "that he will be very happy to discuss the subject with you."

"I know what he thinks; he came to see me last evening."

"As soon as you had arrived? Then you know all about it, and you needn't apply to me for information."

"It isn't information I want. At bottom, it's sympathy. I had set my heart on that marriage; the idea did what so few things do—it satisfied the imagination."

"Your imagination, yes. But not that of the persons concerned."

"You mean by that of course that I am not concerned. Of course not directly. But when one is such an old friend, one can't help having something at stake. You forget how long I have known Pansy. You mean, of course," Madame Merle added, "that *you* are one of the persons concerned."

"No; that's the last thing I mean. I am very weary of it all."

Madame Merle hesitated a little. "Ah yes, your work's done."

"Take care what you say," said Isabel, very gravely.

"Oh, I take care; never perhaps more than when it appears least. Your husband judges you severely."

Isabel made for a moment no answer to this; she felt choked with bitterness. It was not the insolence of Madame Merle's informing her that Osmond had been taking her into his confidence as against his wife that struck her most: for she was not quick to believe that this was meant for insolence. Madame Merle was very rarely insolent, and only when it was exactly right. It was not right now, or at least it was not right yet. What touched Isabel like a drop of corrosive acid upon an open wound, was the knowledge that Osmond dishonoured her in his words as well as in his thoughts.

"Should you like to know how I judge him?" she asked at last.

"No, because you would never tell me. And it would be painful for me to know."

There was a pause, and for the first time since she had known her, Isabel thought Madame Merle disagreeable. She wished she would leave her.

"Remember how attractive Pansy is, and don't despair," she said abruptly, with a desire that this should close their interview.

But Madame Merle's expansive presence underwent no contraction. She only gathered her mantle about her, and, with the movement, scattered upon the air a faint, agreeable fragrance.

"I don't despair," she answered; "I feel encouraged. And I didn't come to scold you; I came if possible to learn the truth. I know you will tell it if I ask you. It's an immense blessing with you, that one can count upon that. No, you won't believe what a comfort I take in it."

"What truth do you speak of?" Isabel asked, wondering.

"Just this: whether Lord Warburton changed his mind quite of his own movement, or because you recommended it. To please himself, I mean; or to please you. Think of the confidence I must still have in you, in spite of having lost a little of it," Madame Merle continued with a smile, "to ask such a question as that!" She sat looking at Isabel a moment, to judge of the effect of her words, and then she went on—"Now don't be heroic, don't be unreasonable, don't take offence. It seems to me I do you an honour in speaking so. I don't know another woman to whom I would do it. I haven't the least idea that any other woman would tell me the truth. And don't you see how well it is that your husband should know it? It is true that he doesn't appear to have had any tact whatever in trying to extract it; he has indulged in gratuitous suppositions. But that doesn't alter the fact that it would make a difference in his view of his

daughter's prospects to know distinctly what really occurred. If Lord Warburton simply got tired of the poor child, that's one thing; it's a pity. If he gave her up to please you, it's another. That's a pity, too; but in a different way. Then, in the latter case, you would perhaps resign yourself to not being pleased—to simply seeing your step-daughter married. Let him off—let us have him!”

Madame Merle had proceeded very deliberately, watching her companion and apparently thinking she could proceed safely. As she went on, Isabel grew pale; she clasped her hands more tightly in her lap. It was not that Madame Merle had at last thought it the right time to be insolent; for this was not what was most apparent. It was a worse horror than that. “Who are you—what are you?” Isabel murmured. “What have you to do with my husband?” It was strange that, for the moment, she drew as near to him as if she had loved him.

“Ah, then you take it heroically! I am very sorry. Don't think, however, that I shall do so.”

“What have you to do with me?” Isabel went on.

Madame Merle slowly got up, stroking her muff, but not removing her eyes from Isabel's face.

“Everything!” she answered.

Isabel sat there looking up at her, without rising; her face was almost a prayer to be enlightened. But the light of her visitor's eyes seemed only a darkness.

“Oh, misery!” she murmured at last; and she fell back, covering her face with her hands. It had come over her like a high-surfing wave that Mrs. Touchett was right. Madame Merle had married her! Be-

fore she uncovered her face again, this lady had left the room.

Isabel took a drive, alone, that afternoon; she wished to be far away, under the sky, where she could descend from her carriage and tread upon the daisies. She had long before this taken old Rome into her confidence, for in a world of ruins the ruin of her happiness seemed a less unnatural catastrophe. She rested her weariness upon things that had crumbled for centuries and yet still were upright; she dropped her secret sadness into the silence of lonely places, where its very modern quality detached itself and grew objective, so that as she sat in a sun-warmed angle on a winter's day, or stood in a mouldy church to which no one came, she could almost smile at it and think of its smallness. Small it was, in the large Roman record, and her haunting sense of the continuity of the human lot easily carried her from the less to the greater. She had become deeply, tenderly acquainted with Rome; it interfused and moderated her passion. But she had grown to think of it chiefly as the place where people had suffered. This was what came to her in the starved churches, where the marble columns, transferred from pagan ruins, seemed to offer her a companionship in endurance, and the musty incense to be a compound of long-unanswered prayers. There was no gentler nor less consistent heretic than Isabel; the firmest of worshippers, gazing at dark altar-pictures or clustered candles, could not have felt more intimately the suggestiveness of these objects nor have been more liable at such moments to a spiritual visitation. Pansy, as we know, was almost always her companion, and of late the Countess

Gemini, balancing a pink parasol, had lent brilliancy to their equipage; but she still occasionally found herself alone when it suited her mood, and where it suited the place. On such occasions she had several resorts; the most accessible of which perhaps was a seat on the low parapet which edges the wide grassy space lying before the high, cold front of St. John Lateran; where you look across the Campagna at the far-trailing outline of the Alban Mount, and at that mighty plain between, which is still so full of all that has vanished from it. After the departure of her cousin and his companions she wandered about more than usual; she carried her sombre spirit from one familiar shrine to the other. Even when Pansy and the Countess were with her, she felt the touch of a vanished world. The carriage, passing out of the walls of Rome, rolled through narrow lanes, where the wild honeysuckle had begun to tangle itself in the hedges, or waited for her in quiet places where the fields lay near, while she strolled further and further over the flower-freckled turf, or sat on a stone that had once had a use, and gazed through the veil of her personal sadness at the splendid sadness of the scene—at the dense, warm light, the far gradations and soft confusions of colour, the motionless shepherds in lonely attitudes, the hills where the cloud-shadows had the lightness of a blush.

On the afternoon I began with speaking of, she had taken a resolution not to think of Madame Merle; but the resolution proved vain, and this lady's image hovered constantly before her. She asked herself, with an almost childlike horror of the supposition, whether to this intimate friend of several years the

great historical epithet of *wicked* were to be applied. She knew the idea only by the Bible and other literary works; to the best of her belief she had no personal acquaintance with wickedness. She had desired a large acquaintance with human life, and in spite of her having flattered herself that she cultivated it with some success, this elementary privilege had been denied her. Perhaps it was not wicked—in the historic sense—to be false; for that was what Madame Merle had been. Isabel's Aunt Lydia had made this discovery long before, and had mentioned it to her niece; but Isabel had flattered herself at this time that she had a much richer view of things, especially of the spontaneity of her own career and the nobleness of her own interpretations, than poor stiffly-reasoning Mrs. Touchett. Madame Merle had done what she wanted; she had brought about the union of her two friends; a reflection which could not fail to make it a matter of wonder that she should have desired such an event. There were people who had the match-making passion, like the votaries of art for art; but Madame Merle, great artist as she was, was scarcely one of these. She thought too ill of marriage, too ill even of life; she had desired that marriage, but she had not desired others. She therefore had had an idea of gain, and Isabel asked herself where she had found her profit. It took her, naturally, a long time to discover, and even then her discovery was very incomplete. It came back to her that Madame Merle, though she had seemed to like her from their first meeting at Gardencourt, had been doubly affectionate after Mr. Touchett's death, and after learning that her young friend was a victim of the good old

man's benevolence. She had found her profit not in the gross device of borrowing money from Isabel, but in the more refined idea of introducing one of her intimates to the young girl's fortune. She had naturally chosen her closest intimate, and it was already vivid enough to Isabel that Gilbert Osmond occupied this position. She found herself confronted in this manner with the conviction that the man in the world whom she had supposed to be the least sordid, had married her for her money. Strange to say, it had never before occurred to her; if she had thought a good deal of harm of Osmond, she had not done him this particular injury. This was the worst she could think of, and she had been saying to herself that the worst was still to come. A man might marry a woman for her money, very well; the thing was often done. But at least he should let her know! She wondered whether, if he wanted her money, her money to-day would satisfy him. Would he take her money and let her go? Ah, if Mr. Touchett's great charity would help her to-day, it would be blessed indeed! It was not slow to occur to her that if Madame Merle had wished to do Osmond a service, his recognition of the fact must have lost its warmth. What must be his feelings to-day in regard to his too zealous benefactress, and what expression must they have found on the part of such a master of irony? It is a singular, but a characteristic, fact that before Isabel returned from her silent drive she had broken its silence by the soft exclamation—

“Poor Madame Merle!”

Her exclamation would perhaps have been justified if on this same afternoon she had been concealed behind one of the valuable curtains of time-softened

damask which dressed the interesting little *salon* of the lady to whom it referred; the carefully-arranged apartment to which we once paid a visit in company with the discreet Mr. Rosier. In that apartment, towards six o'clock, Gilbert Osmond was seated, and his hostess stood before him as Isabel had seen her stand on an occasion commemorated in this history with an emphasis appropriate not so much to its apparent as to its real importance.

"I don't believe you are unhappy; I believe you like it," said Madame Merle.

"Did I say I was unhappy?" Osmond asked, with a face grave enough to suggest that he might have been so.

"No, but you don't say the contrary, as you ought in common gratitude."

"Don't talk about gratitude," Osmond returned, dryly. "And don't aggravate me," he added in a moment.

Madame Merle slowly seated herself, with her arms folded and her white hands arranged as a support to one of them and an ornament, as it were, to the other. She looked exquisitely calm, but impressively sad.

"On your side, don't try to frighten me," she said. "I wonder whether you know some of my thoughts."

"No more than I can help. I have quite enough of my own."

"That's because they are so delightful."

Osmond rested his head against the back of his chair and looked at his companion for a long time, with a kind of cynical directness which seemed also

partly an expression of fatigue. "You do aggravate me," he remarked in a moment. "I am very tired."

"*Eh moi, donc!*" cried Madame Merle.

"With you, it's because you fatigue yourself. With me, it's not my own fault."

"When I fatigue myself it's for you. I have given you an interest; that's a great gift."

"Do you call it an interest?" Osmond inquired, languidly.

"Certainly, since it helps you to pass your time."

"The time has never seemed longer to me than this winter."

"You have never looked better; you have never been so agreeable, so brilliant."

"Damn my brilliancy!" Osmond murmured, thoughtfully. "How little, after all, you know me!"

"If I don't know you, I know nothing," said Madame Merle, smiling. "You have the feeling of complete success."

"No, I shall not have that till I have made you stop judging me."

"I did that long ago. I speak from old knowledge. But you express yourself more, too."

Osmond hesitated a moment. "I wish you would express yourself less!"

"You wish to condemn me to silence? Remember that I have never been a chatterbox. At any rate, there are three or four things that I should like to say to you first.—Your wife doesn't know what to do with herself," she went on, with a change of tone.

"Excuse me; she knows perfectly. She has a line sharply marked out. She means to carry out her ideas."

"Her ideas, to-day, must be remarkable."

"Certainly they are. She has more of them than ever."

"She was unable to show me any this morning," said Madame Merle. "She seemed in a very simple, almost in a stupid, state of mind. She was completely bewildered."

"You had better say at once that she was pathetic."

"Ah no, I don't want to encourage you too much."

Osmond still had his head against the cushion behind him; the ankle of one foot rested on the other knee. So he sat for a while. "I should like to know what is the matter with you," he said, at last.

"The matter—the matter—" And here Madame Merle stopped. Then she went on, with a sudden outbreak of passion, a burst of summer thunder in a clear sky—"The matter is that I would give my right hand to be able to weep, and that I can't!"

"What good would it do you to weep?"

"It would make me feel as I felt before I knew you."

"If I have dried your tears, that's something. But I have seen you shed them."

"Oh, I believe you will make me cry still. I have a great hope of that. I was vile this morning; I was horrid," said Madame Merle.

"If Isabel was in the stupid state of mind you mention, she probably didn't perceive it," Osmond answered.

"It was precisely my devilry that stupefied her. I couldn't help it; I was full of something bad. Perhaps it was something good; I don't know. You have not only dried up my tears; you have dried up my soul."

"It is not I then that am responsible for my wife's condition," Osmond said. "It is pleasant to think that I shall get the benefit of your influence upon her. Don't you know the soul is an immortal principle? How can it suffer alteration?"

"I don't believe at all that it's an immortal principle. I believe it can perfectly be destroyed. That's what has happened to mine, which was a very good one to start with; and it's you I have to thank for it. —You are very bad," Madame Merle added, gravely.

"Is this the way we are to end?" Osmond asked, with the same studied coldness.

"I don't know how we are to end. I wish I did! How do bad people end? You have made me bad."

"I don't understand you. You seem to me quite good enough," said Osmond, his conscious indifference giving an extreme effect to the words.

Madame Merle's self-possession tended on the contrary to diminish, and she was nearer losing it than on any occasion on which we have had the pleasure of meeting her. Her eye brightened, even flashed; her smile betrayed a painful effort. "Good enough for anything that I have done with myself? I suppose that's what you mean."

"Good enough to be always charming!" Osmond exclaimed, smiling too.

"Oh God!" his companion murmured; and, sitting there in her ripe freshness, she had recourse to the same gesture that she had provoked on Isabel's part in the morning; she bent her face and covered it with her hands.

"Are you going to weep, after all?" Osmond asked;

and on her remaining motionless he went on—"Have I ever complained to you?"

She dropped her hands quickly. "No, you have taken your revenge otherwise—you have taken it on *her*."

Osmond threw back his head further; he looked a while at the ceiling, and might have been supposed to be appealing, in an informal way, to the heavenly powers. "Oh, the imagination of women! It's always vulgar, at bottom. You talk of revenge like a third-rate novelist."

"Of course you haven't complained. You have enjoyed your triumph too much."

"I am rather curious to know what you call my triumph."

"You have made your wife afraid of you."

Osmond changed his position; he leaned forward, resting his elbows on his knees and looking a while at a beautiful old Persian rug, at his feet. He had an air of refusing to accept any one's valuation of anything, even of time, and of preferring to abide by his own; a peculiarity which made him at moments an irritating person to converse with. "Isabel is not afraid of me, and it's not what I wish," he said at last. "To what do you wish to provoke me when you say such things as that?"

"I have thought over all the harm you can do me," Madame Merle answered. "Your wife was afraid of me this morning, but in me it was really you she feared."

"You may have said things that were in very bad taste; I am not responsible for that. I didn't see the use of your going to see her at all; you are capable

of acting without her. I have not made you afraid of me, that I can see," Osmond went on; "how then should I have made her? You are at least as brave. I can't think where you have picked up such rubbish; one might suppose you knew me by this time." He got up, as he spoke, and walked to the chimney, where he stood a moment bending his eye, as if he had seen them for the first time, on the delicate specimens of rare porcelain with which it was covered. He took up a small cup and held it in his hand; then, still holding it and leaning his arm on the mantel, he continued: "You always see too much in everything; you overdo it; you lose sight of the real. I am much simpler than you think."

"I think you are very simple." And Madame Merle kept her eye upon her cup. "I have come to that with time. I judged you, as I say, of old; but it is only since your marriage that I have understood you. I have seen better what you have been to your wife than I ever saw what you were for me. Please be very careful of that precious object."

"It already has a small crack," said Osmond, dryly, as he put it down. "If you didn't understand me before I married, it was cruelly rash of you to put me into such a box. However, I took a fancy to my box myself; I thought it would be a comfortable fit. I asked very little; I only asked that she should like me."

"That she should like you so much."

"So much, of course; in such a case one asks the maximum. That she should adore me, if you will. Oh yes, I wanted that."

"I never adored you," said Madame Merle.

"Ah, but you pretended to!"

"It is true that you never accused me of being a comfortable fit," Madame Merle went on.

"My wife has declined—declined to do anything of the sort," said Osmond. "If you are determined to make a tragedy of that, the tragedy is hardly for her."

"The tragedy is for me!" Madame Merle exclaimed, rising, with a long low sigh, but giving a glance at the same time at the contents of her mantelshelf. "It appears that I am to be severely taught the disadvantages of a false position."

"You express yourself like a sentence in a copy-book. We must look for our comfort where we can find it. If my wife doesn't like me, at least my child does. I shall look for compensations in Pansy. Fortunately I haven't a fault to find with her."

"Ah," said Madame Merle, softly, "if I had a child—"

Osmond hesitated a moment; and then, with a little formal air—"The children of others may be a great interest!" he announced.

"You are more like a copy-book than I. There is something, after all, that holds us together."

"Is it the idea of the harm I may do 'you?'" Osmond asked.

"No; it's the idea of the good I may do for you. It is that," said Madame Merle, "that made me so jealous of Isabel. I want it to be *my* work," she added, with her face, which had grown hard and bitter, relaxing into its usual social expression.

Osmond took up his hat and his umbrella, and after giving the former article two or three strokes with his coat-cuff—"On the whole, I think," he said, "you had better leave it to me."

After he had left her, Madame Merle went and lifted from the mantel-shelf the attenuated coffee-cup in which he had mentioned the existence of a crack; but she looked at it rather abstractedly. "Have I been so vile all for nothing?" she murmured to herself.

XI.

As the Countess Gemini was not acquainted with the ancient monuments, Isabel occasionally offered to introduce her to these interesting relics and to give their afternoon drive an antiquarian aim. The Countess, who professed to think her sister-in-law a prodigy of learning, never made an objection, and gazed at masses of Roman brickwork as patiently as if they had been mounds of modern drapery. She was not an antiquarian; but she was so delighted to be in Rome that she only desired to float with the current. She would gladly have passed an hour every day in the damp darkness of the Baths of Titus, if it had been a condition of her remaining at the Palazzo Roccanera. Isabel, however, was not a severe cicerone; she used to visit the ruins chiefly because they offered an excuse for talking about other matters than the love-affairs of the ladies of Florence, as to which her companion was never weary of offering information. It must be added that during these visits the Countess was not very active; her preference was to sit in the carriage and exclaim that everything was most interesting. It was in this manner that she had hitherto examined the Coliseum, to the infinite regret of her niece, who—with all the respect

that she owed her—could not see why she should not descend from the vehicle and enter the building. Pansy had so little chance to ramble that her view of the case was not wholly disinterested; it may be divined that she had a secret hope that, once inside, her aunt might be induced to climb to the upper tiers. There came a day when the Countess announced her willingness to undertake this feat—a mild afternoon in March, when the windy month expressed itself in occasional puffs of spring. The three ladies went into the Coliseum together, but Isabel left her companions to wander over the place. She had often ascended to those desolate ledges from which the Roman crowd used to bellow applause, and where now the wild flowers (when they are allowed), bloom in the deep crevices; and to-day she felt weary, and preferred to sit in the despoiled arena. It made an intermission, too, for the Countess often asked more from one's attention than she gave in return; and Isabel believed that when she was alone with her niece she let the dust gather for a moment upon the ancient scandals of Florence. She remained below, therefore, while Pansy guided her indiscriminating aunt to the steep brick staircase at the foot of which the custodian unlocks the tall wooden gate. The great inclosure was half in shadow; the western sun brought out the pale red tone of the great blocks of travertine—the latent colour which is the only living element in the immense ruin. Here and there wandered a peasant or a tourist, looking up at the far sky-line where in the clear stillness a multitude of swallows kept circling and plunging. Isabel presently became aware that one of the other visitors, planted in the middle of the arena, had turned his atten-

tion to her own person, and was looking at her with a certain little poise of the head, which she had some weeks before perceived to be characteristic of baffled but indestructible purpose. Such an attitude, to-day, could belong only to Mr. Edward Rosier; and this gentleman proved in fact to have been considering the question of speaking to her. When he had assured himself that she was unaccompanied he drew near, remarking that though she would not answer his letters she would perhaps not wholly close her ears to his spoken eloquence. She replied that her step-daughter was close at hand and she could only give him five minutes; whereupon he took out his watch and sat down upon a broken block.

"It's very soon told," said Edward Rosier. "I have sold all my bibelots!"

Isabel gave, instinctively, an exclamation of horror; it was as if he had told her he had had all his teeth drawn.

"I have sold them by auction at the Hôtel Drouot," he went on. "The sale took place three days ago, and they have telegraphed me the result. It's magnificent."

"I am glad to hear it; but I wish you had kept your pretty things."

"I have the money instead—forty thousand dollars. Will Mr. Osmond think me rich enough now?"

"Is it for that you did it?" Isabel asked, gently.

"For what else in the world could it be? That is the only thing I think of. I went to Paris and made my arrangements. I couldn't stop for the sale; I couldn't have seen them going off; I think it would have killed me. But I put them into good hands, and

they brought high prices. I should tell you I have kept my enamels. Now I have got the money in my pocket, and he can't say I'm poor!" the young man exclaimed, defiantly.

"He will say now that you are not wise," said Isabel, as if Gilbert Osmond had never said this before.

Rosier gave her a sharp look.

"Do you mean that without my bibelots I am nothing? Do you mean that they were the best thing about me? That's what they told me in Paris; oh, they were very frank about it. But they hadn't seen *her*!"

"My dear friend, you deserve to succeed," said Isabel, very kindly.

"You say that so sadly that it's the same as if you said I shouldn't." And he questioned her eye with the clear trepidation of his own. He had the air of a man who knows he has been the talk of Paris for a week and is full half a head taller in consequence; but who also has a painful suspicion that in spite of this increase of stature one or two persons still have the perversity to think him diminutive. "I know what happened here while I was away," he went on. "What does Mr. Osmond expect, after she has refused Lord Warburton?"

Isabel hesitated a moment.

"That she will marry another nobleman."

"What other nobleman?"

"One that he will pick out."

Rosier slowly got up, putting his watch into his waistcoat-pocket.

"You are laughing at some one; but this time I don't think it's at me."

"I didn't mean to laugh," said Isabel. "I laugh very seldom. Now you had better go away."

"I feel very safe!" Rosier declared, without moving. This might be; but it evidently made him feel more so to make the announcement in rather a loud voice, balancing himself a little complacently, on his toes, and looking all around the Coliseum, as if it were filled with an audience. Suddenly Isabel saw him change colour; there was more of an audience than he had suspected. She turned, and perceived that her two companions had returned from their excursion.

"You must really go away," she said, quickly.

"Ah, my dear lady, pity me!" Edward Rosier murmured, in a voice strangely at variance with the announcement I have just quoted. And then he added, eagerly, like a man who in the midst of his misery is seized by a happy thought—"Is that lady the Countess Gemini? I have a great desire to be presented to her."

Isabel looked at him a moment.

"She has no influence with her brother."

"Ah, what a monster you make him out!" Rosier exclaimed, glancing at the Countess, who advanced, in front of Pansy, with an animation partly due perhaps to the fact that she perceived her sister-in-law to be engaged in conversation with a very pretty young man.

"I am glad you have kept your enamels!" Isabel exclaimed, leaving him. She went straight to Pansy, who, on seeing Edward Rosier, had stopped short, with lowered eyes. "We will go back to the carriage," said Isabel gently.

"Yes, it is getting late," Pansy answered, more

gently still. And she went on without a murmur, without faltering or glancing back.

Isabel, however, allowed herself this last liberty, and saw that a meeting had immediately taken place between the Countess and Mr. Rosier. He had removed his hat, and was bowing and smiling; he had evidently introduced himself; while the Countess's expressive back displayed to Isabel's eye a gracious inclination. These facts, however, were presently lost to sight, for Isabel and Pansy took their places again in the carriage. Pansy, who faced her stepmother, at first kept her eyes fixed on her lap; then she raised them and rested them on Isabel's. There shone out of each of them a little melancholy ray—a spark of timid passion which touched Isabel to the heart. At the same time a wave of envy passed over her soul, as she compared the tremulous longing, the definite ideal, of the young girl with her own dry despair.

“Poor little Pansy!” she said, affectionately.

“Oh, never mind!” Pansy answered, in the tone of eager apology.

And then there was a silence; the Countess was a long time coming.

“Did you show your aunt everything, and did she enjoy it?” Isabel asked at last.

“Yes, I showed her everything. I think she was very much pleased.”

“And you are not tired, I hope.”

“Oh no, thank you, I am not tired.”

The Countess still remained behind, so that Isabel requested the footman to go into the Coliseum and tell her that they were waiting. He presently returned with the announcement that the Signora Con-

tessa begged them not to wait—she would come home in a cab!

About a week after this lady's quick sympathies had enlisted themselves with Mr. Rosier, Isabel, going rather late to dress for dinner, found Pansy sitting in her room. The girl seemed to have been waiting for her; she got up from her low chair.

"Excuse my taking the liberty," she said, in a small voice. "It will be the last—for some time."

Her voice was strange, and her eyes, widely opened, had an excited, frightened look.

"You are not going away!" Isabel exclaimed.

"I am going to the convent."

"To the convent?"

Pansy drew nearer, till she was near enough to put her arms round Isabel and rest her head on her shoulder. She stood this way a moment, perfectly still; but Isabel could feel her trembling. The tremor of her little body expressed everything that she was unable to say.

Nevertheless, Isabel went on in a moment—

"Why are you going to the convent?"

"Because papa thinks it best. He says a young girl is better, every now and then, for making a little retreat. He says the world, always the world, is very bad for a young girl. This is just a chance for a little seclusion—a little reflection." Pansy spoke in short detached sentences, as if she could not trust herself. And then she added, with a triumph of self-control—"I think papa is right; I have been so much in the world this winter."

Her announcement had a strange effect upon

Isabel; it seemed to carry a larger meaning than the girl herself knew.

"When was this decided?" she asked. "I have heard nothing of it."

"Papa told me half-an-hour ago; he thought it better it shouldn't be too much talked about in advance. Madame Catherine is to come for me at a quarter past seven, and I am only to take two dresses. It is only for a few weeks; I am sure it will be very good. I shall find all those ladies who used to be so kind to me, and I shall see the little girls who are being educated. I am very fond of little girls," said Pansy, with a sort of diminutive grandeur. "And I am also very fond of Mother Catherine. I shall be very quiet, and think a great deal."

Isabel listened to her, holding her breath; she was almost awe-struck.

"Think of *me*, sometimes," she said.

"Ah, come and see me soon!" cried Pansy; and the cry was very different from the heroic remarks of which she had just delivered herself.

Isabel could say nothing more; she understood nothing; she only felt that she did not know her husband yet. Her answer to Pansy was a long tender kiss.

Half-an-hour later she learned from her maid that Madame Catherine had arrived in a cab, and had departed again with the Signorina. On going to the drawing-room before dinner she found the Countess Gemini alone, and this lady characterised the incident by exclaiming, with a wonderful toss of the head—" *En voilà, ma chère, une pose!*" But if it was an affectation, she was at a loss to see what her hus-

band affected. She could only dimly perceive that he had more traditions than she supposed. It had become her habit to be so careful as to what she said to him that, strange as it may appear, she hesitated, for several minutes after he had come in, to allude to his daughter's sudden departure; she spoke of it only after they were seated at table. But she had forbidden herself ever to ask Osmond a question; all she could do was to make an affirmation, and there was one that came very naturally.

"I shall miss Pansy very much."

Osmond looked a while, with his head inclined a little, at the basket of flowers in the middle of the table.

"Ah, yes," he said at last, "I had thought of that. You must go and see her, you know; but not too often. I dare say you wonder why I sent her to the good sisters; but I doubt whether I can make you understand. It doesn't matter; don't trouble yourself about it. That's why I had not spoken of it. I didn't believe you would enter into it. But I have always had the idea; I have always thought it a part of the education of a young girl. A young girl should be fresh and fair; she should be innocent and gentle. With the manners of the present time she is liable to become so dusty and crumpled! Pansy is a little dusty, a little dishevelled; she has knocked about too much. This bustling, pushing rabble, that calls itself society—one should take her out of it occasionally. Convents are very quiet, very convenient, very salutary. I like to think of her there, in the old garden, under the arcade, among those tranquil, virtuous women. Many of them are gentlewomen born; several of them are

noble. She will have her books and her drawing; she will have her piano. I have made the most liberal arrangements. There is to be nothing ascetic; there is just to be a certain little feeling. She will have time to think, and there is something I want her to think about." Osmond spoke deliberately, reasonably, still with his head on one side, as if he were looking at the basket of flowers. His tone, however, was that of a man not so much offering an explanation as putting a thing into words—almost into pictures—to see, himself, how it would look. He contemplated a while the picture he had evoked, and seemed greatly pleased with it. And then he went on—"The Catholics are very wise, after all. The convent is a great institution; we can't do without it; it corresponds to an essential need in families, in society. It's a school of good manners; it's a school of repose. Oh, I don't want to detach my daughter from the world," he added; "I don't want to make her fix her thoughts on the other one. This one is very well, after all, and she may think of it as much as she chooses. Only she must think of it in the right way."

Isabel gave an extreme attention to this little sketch; she found it indeed intensely interesting. It seemed to show her how far her husband's desire to be effective was capable of going—to the point of playing picturesque tricks upon the delicate organism of his daughter. She could not understand his purpose, no—not wholly; but she understood it better than he supposed or desired, inasmuch as she was convinced that the whole proceeding was an elaborate mystification, addressed to herself and destined to act upon her imagination. He wished to do something

sudden and arbitrary, something unexpected and refined; to mark the difference between his sympathies and her own, and to show that if he regarded his daughter as a precious work of art, it was natural he should be more and more careful about the finishing touches. If he wished to be effective he had succeeded; the incident struck a chill into Isabel's heart. Pansy had known the convent in her childhood and had found a happy home there; she was fond of the good sisters, who were very fond of her, and there was therefore, for the moment, no definite hardship in her lot. But all the same, the girl had taken fright; the impression her father wanted to make would evidently be sharp enough. The old Protestant tradition had never faded from Isabel's imagination, and as her thoughts attached themselves to this striking example of her husband's genius—she sat looking, like him, at the basket of flowers—poor little Pansy became the heroine of a tragedy. Osmond wished it to be known that he shrank from nothing, and Isabel found it hard to pretend to eat her dinner. There was a certain relief, presently, in hearing the high, bright voice of her sister-in-law. The Countess, too, apparently, had been thinking the thing out; but she had arrived at a different conclusion from Isabel.

"It is very absurd, my dear Osmond," she said, "to invent so many pretty reasons for poor Pansy's banishment. Why don't you say at once that you want to get her out of my way? Haven't you discovered that I think very well of Mr. Rosier? I do indeed; he seems to me a delightful young man. He has made me believe in true love; I never did before! Of course you have made up your mind that

with those convictions I am dreadful company for Pansy."

Osmond took a sip of a glass of wine; he looked perfectly good-humoured.

"My dear Amy," he answered, smiling as if he were uttering a piece of gallantry, "I don't know anything about your convictions, but if I suspected that they interfere with mine it would be much simpler to banish you."

XII.

THE Countess was not banished, but she felt the insecurity of her tenure of her brother's hospitality. A week after this incident Isabel received a telegram from England, dated from Gardencourt, and bearing the stamp of Mrs. Touchett's authorship. "Ralph cannot last many days," it ran, "and if convenient would like to see you. Wishes me to say that you must come only if you have not other duties. Say, for myself, that you used to talk a good deal about your duty and to wonder what it was; shall be curious to see whether you have found out. Ralph is dying, and there is no other company." Isabel was prepared for this news, having received from Henrietta Stackpole a detailed account of her journey to England with her appreciative patient. Ralph had arrived more dead than alive, but she had managed to convey him to Gardencourt, where he had taken to his bed, which, as Miss Stackpole wrote, he evidently would never leave again. "I like him much better sick than

when he used to be well," said Henrietta, who, it will be remembered, had taken a few years before a sceptical view of Ralph's disabilities. She added that she had really had two patients on her hands instead of one, for that Mr. Goodwood, who had been of no earthly use, was quite as sick, in a different way, as Mr. Touchett. Afterwards she wrote that she had been obliged to surrender the field to Mrs. Touchett, who had just returned from America, and had promptly given her to understand that she didn't wish any interviewing at Gardencourt. Isabel had written to her aunt shortly after Ralph came to Rome, letting her know of his critical condition, and suggesting that she should lose no time in returning to Europe. Mrs. Touchett had telegraphed an acknowledgment of this admonition, and the only further news Isabel received from her was the second telegram which I have just quoted.

Isabel stood a moment looking at the latter missive, then, thrusting it into her pocket, she went straight to the door of her husband's study. Here she again paused an instant, after which she opened the door and went in. Osmond was seated at the table near the window with a folio volume before him, propped against a pile of books. This volume was open at a page of small coloured plates, and Isabel presently saw that he had been copying from it the drawing of an antique coin. A box of water-colours and fine brushes lay before him, and he had already transferred to a sheet of immaculate paper the delicate, finely-tinted disk. His back was turned to the door, but without looking round he recognised his wife.

"Excuse me for disturbing you," she said.

"When I come to your room I always knock," he answered, going on with his work.

"I forgot; I had something else to think of. My cousin is dying."

"Ah, I don't believe that," said Osmond, looking at his drawing through a magnifying glass. "He was dying when we married; he will outlive us all."

Isabel gave herself no time, no thought, to appreciate the careful cynicism of this declaration; she simply went on quickly, full of her own intention—

"My aunt has telegraphed for me; I must go to Gardencourt."

"Why must you go to Gardencourt?" Osmond asked, in the tone of impartial curiosity.

"To see Ralph before he dies."

To this, for some time, Osmond made no rejoinder; he continued to give his chief attention to his work, which was of a sort that would brook no negligence.

"I don't see the need of it," he said at last. "He came to see you here. I didn't like that; I thought his being in Rome a great mistake. But I tolerated it, because it was to be the last time you should see him. Now you tell me it is not to have been the last. Ah, you are not grateful!"

"What am I to be grateful for?"

Gilbert Osmond laid down his little implements, blew a speck of dust from his drawing, slowly got up, and for the first time looked at his wife.

"For my not having interfered while he was here."

"Oh yes, I am. I remember perfectly how distinctly you let me know you didn't like it. I was very glad when he went away."

"Leave him alone then. Don't run after him."

Isabel turned her eyes away from him; they rested upon his little drawing.

"I must go to England," she said, with a full consciousness that her tone might strike an irritable man of taste as stupidly obstinate.

"I shall not like it if you do," Osmond remarked.

"Why should I mind that? You won't like it if I don't. You like nothing I do or don't do. You pretend to think I lie."

Osmond turned slightly pale; he gave a cold smile.

"That's why you must go then? Not to see your cousin, but to take a revenge on me."

"I know nothing about revenge."

"I do," said Osmond. "Don't give me an occasion."

"You are only too eager to take one. You wish immensely that I would commit some folly."

"I shall be gratified then if you disobey me."

"If I disobey you?" said Isabel, in a low tone, which had the effect of gentleness.

"Let it be clear. If you leave Rome to-day it will be a piece of the most deliberate, the most calculated, opposition."

"How can you call it calculated? I received my aunt's telegram but three minutes ago."

"You calculate rapidly; it's a great accomplishment. I don't see why we should prolong our discussion; you know my wish." And he stood there as if he expected to see her withdraw.

But she never moved; she couldn't move, strange as it may seem; she still wished to justify herself; he

had the power, in an extraordinary degree, of making her feel this need. There was something in her imagination that he could always appeal to against her judgment.

"You have no reason for such a wish," said Isabel, "and I have every reason for going. I can't tell you how unjust you seem to me. But I think you know. It is your own opposition that is calculated. It's malignant."

She had never uttered her worst thought to her husband before, and the sensation of hearing it was evidently new to Osmond. But he showed no surprise, and his coolness was apparently a proof that he had believed his wife would in fact be unable to resist for ever his ingenious endeavour to draw her out.

"It is all the more intense, then," he answered. And he added, almost as if he were giving her a friendly counsel—"This is a very important matter." She recognised this; she was fully conscious of the weight of the occasion; she knew that between them they had arrived at a crisis. Its gravity made her careful; she said nothing, and he went on. "You say I have no reason? I have the very best. I dislike, from the bottom of my soul, what you intend to do. It's dishonourable; it's indelicate; it's indecent. Your cousin is nothing whatever to me, and I am under no obligation to make concessions to him. I have already made the very handsomest. Your relations with him, while he was here, kept me on pins and needles; but I let that pass, because from week to week I expected him to go. I have never liked him and he has never liked me. That's why you like him—because he hates me," said Osmond, with a quick, barely

audible tremor in his voice. "I have an ideal of what my wife should do and should not do. She should not travel across Europe alone, in defiance of my deepest desire, to sit at the bedside of other men. Your cousin is nothing to you; he is nothing to us. You smile most expressively when I talk about *us*; but I assure you that *we, we*, is all that I know. I take our marriage seriously; you appear to have found a way of not doing so. I am not aware that we are divorced or separated; for me we are indissolubly united. You are nearer to me than any human creature, and I am nearer to you. It may be a disagreeable proximity; it's one, at any rate, of our own deliberate making. You don't like to be reminded of that, I know; but I am perfectly willing, because—because—" And Osmond paused a moment, looking as if he had something to say which would be very much to the point. "Because I think we should accept the consequences of our actions, and what I value most in life is the honour of a thing!"

He spoke gravely and almost gently; the accent of sarcasm had dropped out of his tone. It had a gravity which checked his wife's quick emotion; the resolution with which she had entered the room found itself caught in a mesh of fine threads. His last words were not a command, they constituted a kind of appeal; and though she felt that any expression of respect on Osmond's part could only be a refinement of egotism, they represented something transcendent and absolute, like the sign of the cross or the flag of one's country. He spoke in the name of something sacred and precious—the observance of a magnificent form. They were as perfectly apart in feeling as two disillusioned

lovers had ever been; but they had never yet separated in act. Isabel had not changed; her old passion for justice still abode within her; and now, in the very thick of her sense of her husband's blasphemous sophistry, it began to throb to a tune which for a moment promised him the victory. It came over her that in his wish to preserve appearances he was after all sincere, and that this, as far as it went, was a merit. Ten minutes before, she had felt all the joy of irreflective action—a joy to which she had so long been a stranger; but action had been suddenly changed to slow renunciation, transformed by the blight of her husband's touch. If she must renounce, however, she would let him know that she was a victim rather than a dupe. "I know you are a master of the art of mockery," she said. "How can you speak of an indissoluble union—how can you speak of your being contented? Where is your union when you accuse me of falsity? Where is your contentment when you have nothing but hideous suspicion in your heart?"

"It is in our living decently together, in spite of such drawbacks."

"We don't live decently together!" Isabel cried.

"Indeed we don't, if you go to England."

"That's very little; that's nothing. I might do much more."

Osmond raised his eyebrows and even his shoulders a little; he had lived long enough in Italy to catch this trick. "Ah, if you have come to threaten me, I prefer my drawing," he said, walking back to his table, where he took up the sheet of paper on which he had been working and stood a moment examining his work.

"I suppose that if I go you will not expect me to come back," said Isabel.

He turned quickly round, and she could see that this movement at least was not studied. He looked at her a little, and then—"Are you out of your mind?" he inquired.

"How can it be anything but a rupture?" she went on; "especially if all you say is true?" She was unable to see how it could be anything but a rupture; she sincerely wished to know what else it might be.

Osmond sat down before his table. "I really can't argue with you on the hypothesis of your defying me," he said. And he took up one of his little brushes again.

Isabel lingered but a moment longer; long enough to embrace with her eye his whole deliberately indifferent, yet most expressive, figure; after which she quickly left the room. Her faculties, her energy, her passion, were all dispersed again; she felt as if a cold, dark mist had suddenly encompassed her. Osmond possessed in a supreme degree the art of eliciting one's weakness.

On her way back to her room she found the Countess Gemini standing in the open doorway of a little parlour in which a small collection of heterogeneous books had been arranged. The Countess had an open volume in her hand; she appeared to have been glancing down a page which failed to strike her as interesting. At the sound of Isabel's step she raised her head.

"Ah my dear," she said, "you, who are so literary, do tell me some amusing book to read! Everything here is so fearfully edifying. Do you think this would do me any good?"

Isabel glanced at the title of the volume she held out, but without reading or understanding it. "I am afraid I can't advise you. I have had bad news. My cousin, Ralph Touchett, is dying."

The Countess threw down her book. "Ah, he was so nice! I am sorry for you," she said.

"You would be sorrier still if you knew."

"What is there to know? You look very badly," the Countess added. "You must have been with Osmond."

Half-an-hour before, Isabel would have listened very coldly to an intimation that she should ever feel a desire for the sympathy of her sister-in-law and there can be no better proof of her present embarrassment than the fact that she almost clutched at this lady's fluttering attention. "I have been with Osmond," she said, while the Countess's bright eyes glittered at her.

"I am sure he has been odious!" the Countess cried. "Did he say he was glad poor Mr. Touchett is dying?"

"He said it is impossible I should go to England."

The Countess's mind, when her interests were concerned, was agile; she already foresaw the extinction of any further brightness in her visit to Rome. Ralph Touchett would die, Isabel would go into mourning, and then there would be no more dinner-parties. Such a prospect produced for a moment in her countenance an expressive grimace; but this rapid, picturesque play of feature was her only tribute to disappointment. After all, she reflected, the game was almost played out; she had already overstayed her invitation. And then she cared enough for Isabel's trouble to forget her own, and she saw that Isabel's trouble was deep.

It seemed deeper than the mere death of a cousin, and the Countess had no hesitation in connecting her exasperating brother with the expression of her sister-in-law's eyes. Her heart beat with an almost joyous expectation; for if she had wished to see Osmond overtopped, the conditions looked favourable now. Of course, if Isabel should go to England, she herself would immediately leave the Palazzo Roccanera; nothing would induce her to remain there with Osmond. Nevertheless she felt an immense desire to hear that Isabel would go to England. "Nothing is impossible for you, my dear," she said, caressingly. "Why else are you rich and clever and good?"

"Why indeed? I feel stupidly weak."

"Why does Osmond say it's impossible?" the Countess asked, in a tone which sufficiently declared that she couldn't imagine.

From the moment that she began to question her, however, Isabel drew back; she disengaged her hand, which the Countess had affectionately taken. But she answered this inquiry with frank bitterness. "Because we are so happy together that we cannot separate even for a fortnight."

"Ah," cried the Countess, while Isabel turned away; "when I want to make a journey my husband simply tells me I can have no money!"

Isabel went to her room, where she walked up and down for an hour. It may seem to some readers that she took things very hard, and it is certain that for a woman of a high spirit she had allowed herself easily to be arrested. It seemed to her that only now she fully measured the great undertaking of matrimony. Marriage meant that in such a case as this,

when one had to choose, one chose as a matter of course for one's husband. "I am afraid—yes, I am afraid," she said to herself more than once, stopping short in her walk. But what she was afraid of was not her husband—his displeasure, his hatred, his revenge; it was not even her own later judgment of her conduct—a consideration which had often held her in check; it was simply the violence there would be in going when Osmond wished her to remain. A gulf of difference had opened between them, but nevertheless it was his desire that she should stay, it was a horror to him that she should go. She knew the nervous fineness with which he could feel an objection. What he thought of her she knew; what he was capable of saying to her she had felt; yet they were married, for all that, and marriage meant that a woman should abide with her husband. She sank down on her sofa at last, and buried her head in a pile of cushions.

When she raised her head again, the Countess Gemini stood before her. She had come in noiselessly, unperceived; she had a strange smile on her thin lips, and a still stranger glitter in her small dark eye.

"I knocked," she said, "but you didn't answer me. So I ventured in. I have been looking at you for the last five minutes. You are very unhappy."

"Yes; but I don't think you can comfort me."

"Will you give me leave to try?" And the Countess sat down on the sofa beside her. She continued to smile, and there was something communicative and exultant in her expression. She appeared to have something to say, and it occurred to Isabel for the

first time that her sister-in-law might say something important. She fixed her brilliant eyes upon Isabel, who found at last a disagreeable fascination in her gaze. "After all," the Countess went on, "I must tell you, to begin with, that I don't understand your state of mind. You seem to have so many scruples, so many reasons, so many ties. When I discovered, ten years ago, that my husband's dearest wish was to make me miserable—of late he has simply let me alone—ah, it was a wonderful simplification! My poor Isabel, you are not simple enough."

"No, I am not simple enough," said Isabel.

"There is something I want you to know," the Countess declared—"because I think you ought to know it. Perhaps you do; perhaps you have guessed it. But if you have, all I can say is that I understand still less why you shouldn't do as you like."

"What do you wish me to know?" Isabel felt a foreboding which made her heart beat. The Countess was about to justify herself, and this alone seemed fortuitous.

But the Countess seemed disposed to play a little with her subject. "In your place I should have guessed it ages ago. Have you never really suspected?"

"I have guessed nothing. What should I have suspected? I don't know what you mean."

"That's because you have got such a pure mind. I never saw a woman with such a pure mind!" cried the Countess.

Isabel slowly got up. "You are going to tell me something horrible."

"You can call it by whatever name you will!" And

the Countess rose also, while the sharp animation of her bright, capricious face emitted a kind of flash. She stood a moment looking at Isabel, and then she said—"My first sister-in-law had no children!"

Isabel stared back at her; the announcement was an anticlimax. "Your first sister-in-law?" she murmured.

"I suppose you know that Osmond has been married before? I have never spoken to you of his wife; I didn't suppose it was proper. But others, less particular, must have done so. The poor little woman lived but two years and died childless. It was after her death that Pansy made her appearance."

Isabel's brow had gathered itself into a frown; her lips were parted in pale, vague wonder. She was trying to follow; there seemed to be more to follow than she could see. "Pansy is not my husband's child, then?"

"Your husband's—in perfection! But no one else's husband's. Some one else's wife's. Ah, my good Isabel," cried the Countess, "with you one must dot one's *i*'s!"

"I don't understand; whose wife's?" said Isabel.

"The wife of a horrid little Swiss, who died twelve years ago. He never recognised Miss Pansy, and there was no reason he should. Osmond did, and that was better."

Isabel stayed the name which rose in a sudden question to her lips; she sank down on her seat again, hanging her head. "Why have you told me this?" she asked, in a voice which the Countess hardly recognised.

"Because I was so tired of your not knowing! I was tired of not having told you. It seemed to me

so dull. It's not a lie, you know; it's exactly as I say."

"I never knew," said Isabel, looking up at her, simply.

"So I believed—though it was hard to believe. Has it never occurred to you that he has been her lover?"

"I don't know. Something has occurred to me. Perhaps it was that."

"She has been wonderfully clever about Pansy!" cried the Countess.

"That thing has never occurred to me," said Isabel. "And as it is—I don't understand."

She spoke in a low, thoughtful tone, and the poor Countess was equally surprised and disappointed at the effect of her revelation. She had expected to kindle a conflagration, and as yet she had barely extracted a spark. Isabel seemed more awe-stricken than anything else.

"Don't you perceive that the child could never pass for her husband's?" the Countess asked. "They had been separated too long for that, and M. Merle had gone to some far country; I think to South America. If she had ever had children—which I am not sure of—she had lost them. On the other hand, circumstances made it convenient enough for Osmond to acknowledge the little girl. His wife was dead—very true; but she had only been dead a year, and what was more natural than that she should have left behind a pledge of their affection? With the aid of a change of residence—he had been living at Naples, and he left it for ever—the little fable was easily set going. My poor sister-in-law, who was

in her grave, couldn't help herself, and the real mother, to save her reputation, renounced all visible property in the child."

"Ah, poor creature!" cried Isabel, bursting into tears. It was a long time since she had shed any; she had suffered a reaction from weeping. But now they gushed with an abundance in which the Countess Gemini found only another discomfiture.

"It's very kind of you to pity her!" she cried, with a discordant laugh. "Yes, indeed, you have a pure mind!"

"He must have been false to his wife," said Isabel, suddenly controlling herself.

"That's all that's wanting—that you should take up *her* cause!" the Countess went on.

"But to me—to me—" And Isabel hesitated, though there was a question in her eyes.

"To you he has been faithful? It depends upon what you call faithful. When he married you, he was no longer the lover of another woman. That state of things had passed away; the lady had repented; and she had a worship of appearances so intense that even Osmond himself got tired of it. You may therefore imagine what it was! But the whole past was between them."

"Yes," said Isabel, "the whole past is between them."

"Ah, this later past is nothing. But for five years they were very intimate."

"Why then did she want him to marry me?"

"Ah, my dear, that's her superiority! Because you had money; and because she thought you would be good to Pansy."

"Poor woman—and Pansy who doesn't like her!" cried Isabel.

"That's the reason she wanted some one whom Pansy would like. She knows it; she knows everything."

"Will she know that you have told me this?"

"That will depend upon whether you tell her. She is prepared for it, and do you know what she counts upon for her defence? On your thinking that I lie. Perhaps you do; don't make yourself uncomfortable to hide it. Only, as it happens this time, I don't. I have told little fibs; but they have never hurt any one but myself."

Isabel sat staring at her companion's story as at a bale of fantastic wares that some strolling gipsy might have unpacked on the carpet at her feet. "Why did Osmond never marry her?" she asked at last.

"Because she had no money." The Countess had an answer for everything, and if she lied she lied well. "No one knows, no one has ever known, what she lives on, or how she has got all those beautiful things. I don't believe Osmond himself knows. Besides, she wouldn't have married him."

"How can she have loved him then?"

"She doesn't love him, in that way. She did at first, and then, I suppose, she would have married him; but at that time her husband was living. By the time M. Merle had rejoined—I won't say his ancestors, because he never had any—her relations with Osmond had changed, and she had grown more ambitious. She hoped she might marry a great man; that has always been her idea. She has waited and

watched and plotted and prayed; but she has never succeeded. I don't call Madame Merle a success, you know. I don't know what she may accomplish yet, but at present she has very little to show. The only tangible result she has ever achieved—except, of course, getting to know every one and staying with them free of expense—has been her bringing you and Osmond together. Oh, she did that, my dear; you needn't look as if you doubted it. I have watched them for years; I know everything—everything. I am thought a great scatterbrain, but I have had enough application of mind to follow up those two. She hates me, and her way of showing it is to pretend to be for ever defending me. When people say I have had fifteen lovers, she looks horrified, and declares that quite half of them were never proved. She has been afraid of me for years, and she has taken great comfort in the vile, false things that people have said about me. She has been afraid I would expose her, and she threatened me one day, when Osmond began to pay his court to you. It was at his house in Florence; do you remember that afternoon when she brought you there and we had tea in the garden? She let me know then that if I should tell tales, two could play at that game. She pretends there is a good deal more to tell about me than about her. It would be an interesting comparison! I don't care a fig what she may say, simply because I know you don't care a fig. You can't trouble your head about me less than you do already. So she may take her revenge as she chooses; I don't think she will frighten you very much. Her great idea has been to be tremendously irreproachable—a kind of full-blown lily—the in-

carnation of propriety. She has always worshipped that god. There should be no scandal about Cæsar's wife you know; and, as I say, she has always hoped to marry Cæsar. That was one reason she wouldn't marry Osmond; the fear that on seeing her with Pansy people would put things together—would even see a resemblance. She has had a terror lest the mother should betray herself. She has been awfully careful; the mother has never done so."

"Yes, yes, the mother has done so," said Isabel, who had listened to all this with a face of deepening dreariness. "She betrayed herself to me the other day, though I didn't recognise her. There appeared to have been a chance of Pansy's making a great marriage, and in her disappointment at its not coming off she almost dropped the mask."

"Ah, that's where she would stumble!" cried the Countess. "She has failed so dreadfully herself that she is determined her daughter shall make it up."

Isabel started at the words "her daughter," which the Countess threw off so familiarly. "It seems very wonderful," she murmured; and in this bewildering impression she had almost lost her sense of being personally touched by the story.

"Now don't go and turn against the poor innocent child!" the Countess went on. "She is very nice, in spite of her lamentable parentage. I have liked Pansy, not because she was hers—but because she had become yours."

"Yes, she has become mine. And how the poor woman must have suffered at seeing me——!" Isabel exclaimed, flushing quickly at the thought.

"I don't believe she has suffered; on the contrary,

she has enjoyed. Osmond's marriage has given Pansy a great lift. Before that she lived in a hole. And do you know what the mother thought? That you might take such a fancy to the child that you would do something for her. Osmond, of course, could never give her a portion. Osmond was really extremely poor; but of course you know all about that.—Ah, my dear," cried the Countess, "why did you ever inherit money?" She stopped a moment, as if she saw something singular in Isabel's face. "Don't tell me now that you will give her a dowry. You are capable of that, but I shouldn't believe it. Don't try to be too good. Be a little wicked, feel a little wicked, for once in your life!"

"It's very strange. I suppose I ought to know, but I am sorry," Isabel said. "I am much obliged to you."

"Yes, you seem to be!" cried the Countess, with a mocking laugh. "Perhaps you are—perhaps you are not. You don't take it as I should have thought."

"How should I take it?" Isabel asked.

"Well, I should say as a woman who has been made use of." Isabel made no answer to this; she only listened, and the Countess went on. "They have always been bound to each other; they remained so even after she became proper. But he has always been more for her than she has been for him. When their little carnival was over they made a bargain that each should give the other complete liberty, but that each should also do everything possible to help the other on. You may ask me how I know such a thing as that. I know it by the way they have behaved. Now see how much better women are than men! She has found a wife for Osmond, but Osmond

has never lifted a little finger for her. She has worked for him, plotted for him, suffered for him; she has even more than once found money for him; and the end of it is that he is tired of her. She is an old habit; there are moments when he needs her; but on the whole he wouldn't miss her if she were removed. And, what's more, to-day she knows it. So you needn't be jealous!" the Countess added, humorously.

Isabel rose from her sofa again; she felt bruised and short of breath; her head was humming with new knowledge. "I am much obliged to you," she repeated. And then she added, abruptly, in quite a different tone—"How do you know all this?"

This inquiry appeared to ruffle the Countess more than Isabel's expression of gratitude pleased her. She gave her companion a bold stare, with which—"Let us assume that I have invented it!" she cried. She too, however, suddenly changed her tone, and, laying her hand on Isabel's arm, said softly, with her sharp, bright smile—"Now will you give up your journey?"

Isabel started a little; she turned away. But she felt weak, and in a moment had to lay her arm upon the mantel-shelf for support. She stood a minute so, and then upon her arm she dropped her dizzy head, with closed eyes and pale lips.

"I have done wrong to speak—I have made you ill!" the Countess cried.

"Ah, I must see Ralph!" Isabel murmured; not in resentment, not in the quick passion her companion had looked for; but in a tone of exquisite far-reaching sadness.

XIII.

THERE was a train for Turin and Paris that evening; and after the Countess had left her, Isabel had a rapid and decisive conference with her maid, who was discreet, devoted, and active. After this, she thought (except of her journey) of only one thing. She must go and see Pansy; from her she could not turn away. She had not seen her yet, as Osmond had given her to understand that it was too soon to begin. She drove at five o'clock to a high door in a narrow street in the quarter of the Piazza Navona, and was admitted by the portress of the convent, a genial and obsequious person. Isabel had been at this institution before; she had come with Pansy to see the sisters. She knew they were good women, and she saw that the large rooms were clean and cheerful, and that the well-used garden had sun for winter and shade for spring. But she disliked the place, and it made her horribly sad; not for the world would she have spent a night there. It produced to-day more than before the impression of a well-appointed prison; for it was not possible to pretend that Pansy was free to leave it. This innocent creature had been presented to her in a new and violent light, but the secondary effect of the revelation was to make Isabel reach out her hand to her.

The portress left her to wait in the parlour of the convent, while she went to make it known that there

was a visitor for the dear young lady. The parlour was a vast, cold apartment, with new-looking furniture; a large clean stove of white porcelain, unlighted; a collection of wax-flowers, under glass; and a series of engravings from religious pictures on the walls. On the other occasion Isabel had thought it less like Rome than like Philadelphia; but to-day she made no reflections; the apartment only seemed to her very empty and very soundless. The portress returned at the end of some five minutes, ushering in another person. Isabel got up, expecting to see one of the ladies of the sisterhood; but to her extreme surprise she found herself confronted with Madame Merle. The effect was strange, for Madame Merle was already so present to her vision that her appearance in the flesh was a sort of reduplication. Isabel had been thinking all day of her falsity, her audacity, her ability, her probable suffering; and these dark things seemed to flash with a sudden light as she entered the room. Her being there at all was a kind of vivid proof. It made Isabel feel faint; if it had been necessary to speak on the spot, she would have been quite unable. But no such necessity was clear to her; it seemed to her indeed that she had absolutely nothing to say to Madame Merle. In one's relations with this lady, however, there were never any absolute necessities; she had a manner which carried off not only her own deficiencies, but those of other people. But she was different from usual; she came in slowly, behind the portress, and Isabel instantly perceived that she was not likely to depend upon her habitual resources. For her, too, the occasion was exceptional, and she had undertaken to treat it by the light of the

moment. This gave her a peculiar gravity; she did not even pretend to smile, and though Isabel saw that she was more than ever playing a part, it seemed to her that on the whole the wonderful woman had never been so natural. She looked at Isabel from head to foot, but not harshly nor defiantly; with a cold gentleness rather, and an absence of any air of allusion to their last meeting. It was as if she had wished to mark a difference; she had been irritated then—she was reconciled now.

“You can leave us alone,” she said to the portress; “in five minutes this lady will ring for you.” And then she turned to Isabel, who, after noting what has just been mentioned, had ceased to look at her, and had let her eyes wander as far as the limits of the room would allow. She wished never to look at Madame Merle again. “You are surprised to find me here, and I am afraid you are not pleased,” this lady went on. “You don’t see why I should have come; it’s as if I had anticipated you. I confess I have been rather indiscreet—I ought to have asked your permission.” There was none of the oblique movement of irony in this; it was said simply and softly; but Isabel, far afloat on a sea of wonder and pain, could not have told herself with what intention it was uttered. “But I have not been sitting long,” Madame Merle continued; “that is, I have not been long with Pansy. I came to see her because it occurred to me this afternoon that she must be rather lonely, and perhaps even a little miserable. It may be good for a young girl; I know so little about young girls, I can’t tell. At any rate it’s a little dismal. Therefore I came—on the chance. I knew of course that you

would come, and her father as well; still, I had not been told that other visitors were forbidden. The good woman—what's her name? Madame Catherine—made no objection whatever. I stayed twenty minutes with Pansy; she has a charming little room, not in the least conventual, with a piano and flowers. She has arranged it delightfully; she has so much taste. Of course it's all none of my business, but I feel happier since I have seen her. She may even have a maid if she likes; but of course she has no occasion to dress. She wears a little black dress; she looks so charming. I went afterwards to see Mother Catherine, who has a very good room too; I assure you I don't find the poor sisters at all monastic. Mother Catherine has a most coquettish little toilet-table, with something that looked uncommonly like a bottle of eau-de-Cologne. She speaks delightfully of Pansy; says it's a great happiness for them to have her. She is a little saint of heaven, and a model to the oldest of them. Just as I was leaving Madame Catherine, the portress came to say to her that there was a lady for the Signorina. Of course I knew it must be you, and I asked her to let me go and receive you in her place. She demurred greatly—I must tell you that—and said it was her duty to notify the Superior; it was of such high importance that you should be treated with respect. I requested her to let the poor Superior alone, and asked her how she supposed I would treat you!"

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So Madame Merle went on, with much of the brilliancy of a woman who had long been a mistress of the art of conversation. But there were phases and gradations in her speech, not one of which was

lost upon Isabel's ear, though her eyes were absent from her companion's face. She had not proceeded far before Isabel noted a sudden rupture in her voice, which was in itself a complete drama. This subtle modulation marked a momentous discovery—the perception of an entirely new attitude on the part of her listener. Madame Merle had guessed in the space of an instant that everything was at end between them, and in the space of another instant she had guessed the reason why. The person who stood there was not the same one she had seen hitherto; it was a very different person—a person who knew her secret. This discovery was tremendous, and for the moment she made it the most accomplished of women faltered and lost her courage. But only for that moment. Then the conscious stream of her perfect manner gathered itself again and flowed on as smoothly as might be to the end. But it was only because she had the end in view that she was able to go on. She had been touched with a point that made her quiver, and she needed all the alertness of her will to repress her agitation. Her only safety was in not betraying herself. She did not betray herself; but the startled quality of her voice refused to improve—she couldn't help it—while she heard herself say she hardly knew what. The tide of her confidence ebbed, and she was able only just to glide into port, faintly grazing the bottom.

Isabel saw all this as distinctly as if it had been a picture on the wall. It might have been a great moment for her, for it might have been a moment of triumph. That Madame Merle had lost her pluck and saw before her the phantom of exposure—this in it-

self was a revenge, this in itself was almost a symptom of a brighter day. And for a moment while she stood apparently looking out of the window, with her back half turned, Isabel enjoyed her knowledge. On the other side of the window lay the garden of the convent; but this is not what Isabel saw; she saw nothing of the budding plants and the glowing afternoon. She saw, in the crude light of that revelation which had already become a part of experience and to which the very frailty of the vessel in which it had been offered her only gave an intrinsic price, the dry, staring fact that she had been a dull un-reverenced tool. All the bitterness of this knowledge surged into her soul again; it was as if she felt on her lips the taste of dishonour. There was a moment during which, if she had turned and spoken, she would have said something that would hiss like a lash. But she closed her eyes, and then the hideous vision died away. What remained was the cleverest woman in the world, standing there within a few feet of her and knowing as little what to think as the meanest. Isabel's only revenge was to be silent still—to leave Madame Merle in this unprecedented situation. She left her there for a period which must have seemed long to this lady, who at last seated herself with a movement which was in itself a confession of helplessness. Then Isabel turned her eyes and looked down at her. Madame Merle was very pale; her own eyes covered Isabel's face. She might see what she would, but her danger was over. Isabel would never accuse her, never reproach her; perhaps because she never would give her the opportunity to defend herself.



"I am come to bid Pansy good-bye," Isabel said at last. "I am going to England to-night."

"Going to England to-night!" Madame Merle repeated, sitting there and looking up at her.

"I am going to Gardencourt. Ralph Touchett is dying."

"Ah, you will feel that." Madame Merle recovered herself; she had a chance to express sympathy. "Do you go alone?" she asked.

"Yes; without my husband."

Madame Merle gave a low, vague murmur; a sort of recognition of the general sadness of things.

"Mr. Touchett never liked me; but I am sorry he is dying. Shall you see his mother?"

"Yes; she has returned from America."

"She used to be very kind to me; but she has changed. Others, too, have changed," said Madame Merle, with a quiet, noble pathos. She paused a moment, and then she said, "And you will see dear old Gardencourt again!"

"I shall not enjoy it much," Isabel answered.

"Naturally—in your grief. But it is on the whole, of all the houses I know, and I know many, the one I should have liked best to live in. I don't venture to send a message to the people," Madame Merle added; "but I should like to give my love to the place."

Isabel turned away.

"I had better go to Pansy," she said. "I have not much time."

And while she looked about her for the proper egress, the door opened and admitted one of the ladies of the house, who advanced with a discreet smile, gently rubbing, under her long loose sleeves, a pair of

plump white hands. Isabel recognised her as Madame Catherine, whose acquaintance she had already made, and begged that she would immediately let her see Miss Osmond. Madame Catherine looked doubly discreet, but smiled very blandly and said—

“It will be good for her to see you. I will take you to her myself.” Then she directed her pleasant, cautious little eye towards Madame Merle.

“Will you let me remain a little?” this lady asked. “It is so good to be here.”

“You may remain always, if you like!” And the good sister gave a knowing laugh.

She led Isabel out of the room, through several corridors, and up a long staircase. All these departments were solid and bare, light and clean; so, thought Isabel, are the great penal establishments. Madame Catherine gently pushed open the door of Pansy’s room and ushered in the visitor; then stood smiling, with folded hands, while the two others met and embraced.

“She is glad to see you,” she repeated; “it will do her good.” And she placed the best chair carefully for Isabel. But she made no movement to seat herself; she seemed ready to retire. “How does this dear child look?” she asked of Isabel, lingering a moment.

“She looks pale,” Isabel answered.

“That is the pleasure of seeing you. She is very happy. *Elle éclaire la maison*,” said the good sister.

Pansy wore, as Madame Merle had said, a little black dress; it was perhaps this that made her look pale.

“They are very good to me—they think of everything!” she exclaimed, with all her customary eagerness to say something agreeable.

"We think of you always—you are a precious charge," Madame Catherine remarked, in the tone of a woman with whom benevolence was a habit, and whose conception of duty was the acceptance of every care. It fell with a leaden weight upon Isabel's ears; it seemed to represent the surrender of a personality, the authority of the Church.

When Madame Catherine had left them together, Pansy kneeled down before Isabel and hid her head in her stepmother's lap. So she remained some moments, while Isabel gently stroked her hair. Then she got up, averting her face and looking about the room.

"Don't you think I have arranged it well? I have everything I have at home."

"It is very pretty; you are very comfortable." Isabel scarcely knew what she could say to her. On the one hand she could not let her think she had come to pity her, and on the other it would be a dull mockery to pretend to rejoice with her. So she simply added, after a moment, "I have come to bid you good-bye. I am going to England."

Pansy's white little face turned red.

"To England! Not to come back?"

"I don't know when I shall come back."

"Ah; I'm sorry," said Pansy, faintly. She spoke as if she had no right to criticise; but her tone expressed a depth of disappointment.

"My cousin, Mr. Touchett, is very ill; he will probably die. I wish to see him," Isabel said.

"Ah, yes; you told me he would die. Of course you must go. And will papa go?"

"No; I shall go alone."

For a moment, Pansy said nothing. Isabel had often wondered what she thought of the apparent relations of her father with his wife; but never by a glance, by an intimation, had she let it be seen that she deemed them deficient in the quality of intimacy. She made her reflections, Isabel was sure; and she must have had a conviction that there were husbands and wives who were more intimate than that. But Pansy was not indiscreet even in thought; she would as little have ventured to judge her gentle stepmother as to criticise her magnificent father. Her heart may almost have stood still, as it would have done if she had seen two of the saints in the great picture in the convent-chapel turn their painted heads and shake them at each other; but as in this latter case she would (for very solemnity's sake) never have mentioned the awful phenomenon, so she put away all knowledge of the secrets of larger lives than her own.

"You will be very far away," she said presently.

"Yes; I shall be far away. But it will scarcely matter," Isabel answered; "for so long as you are here I am very far away from you."

"Yes; but you can come and see me; though you have not come very often."

"I have not come because your father forbade it. To-day I bring nothing with me. I can't amuse you."

"I am not to be amused. That's not what papa wishes."

"Then it hardly matters whether I am in Rome or in England."

"You are not happy, Mrs. Osmond," said Pansy.

"Not very. But it doesn't matter."

"That's what I say to myself. What does it matter? But I should like to come out."

"I wish indeed you might."

"Don't leave me here," Pansy went on, gently.

Isabel was silent a moment; her heart beat fast.

"Will you come away with me now?" she asked.

Pansy looked at her pleadingly.

"Did papa tell you to bring me?"

"No; it's my own proposal."

"I think I had better wait, then. Did papa send me no message?"

"I don't think he knew I was coming."

"He thinks I have not had enough," said Pansy. "But I have. The ladies are very kind to me, and the little girls come to see me. There are some very little ones—such charming children. Then my room—you can see for yourself. All that is very delightful. But I have had enough. Papa wished me to think a little—and I have thought a great deal."

"What have you thought?"

"Well, that I must never displease papa."

"You knew that before."

"Yes; but I know it better. I will do anything—I will do anything," said Pansy. Then, as she heard her own words, a deep, pure blush came into her face. Isabel read the meaning of it; she saw that the poor girl had been vanquished. It was well that Mr. Edward Rosier had kept his enamels! Isabel looked into her eyes and saw there mainly a prayer to be treated easily. She laid her hand on Pansy's, as if to let her know that her look conveyed no diminution of esteem; for the collapse of the girl's momentary resistance (mute and modest though it had been), seemed

only her tribute to the truth of things. She didn't presume to judge others, but she had judged herself; she had seen the reality. She had no vocation for struggling with combinations; in the solemnity of sequestration there was something that overwhelmed her. She bowed her pretty head to authority, and only asked of authority to be merciful. Yes; it was very well that Edward Rosier had reserved a few articles!

Isabel got up; her time was rapidly shortening.

"Good-bye, then," she said; "I leave Rome to-night."

Pansy took hold of her dress; there was a sudden change in the girl's face.

"You look strange; you frighten me."

"Oh, I am very harmless," said Isabel.

"Perhaps you won't come back?"

"Perhaps not. I can't tell."

"Ah, Mrs. Osmond, you won't leave me!"

Isabel now saw that she had guessed everything.

"My dear child, what can I do for you?" she asked.

"I don't know—but I am happier when I think of you."

"You can always think of me."

"Not when you are so far. I am a little afraid," said Pansy.

"What are you afraid of?"

"Of papa—a little. And of Madame Merle. She has just been to see me."

"You must not say that," Isabel observed.

"Oh, I will do everything they want. Only if you are here I shall do it more easily."

Isabel reflected a little.

"I won't desert you," she said at last. "Good-bye, my child."

Then they held each other a moment in a silent embrace, like two sisters; and afterwards Pansy walked along the corridor with her visitor to the top of the staircase.

"Madame Merle has been here," Pansy remarked as they went; and as Isabel answered nothing she added, abruptly, "I don't like Madame Merle!"

Isabel hesitated a moment; then she stopped.

"You must never say that—that you don't like Madame Merle."

Pansy looked at her in wonder; but wonder with Pansy had never been a reason for non-compliance.

"I never will again," she said, with exquisite gentleness.

At the top of the staircase they had to separate, as it appeared to be part of the mild but very definite discipline under which Pansy lived that she should not go down. Isabel descended, and when she reached the bottom the girl was standing above.

"You will come back?" she called out in a voice that Isabel remembered afterwards.

"Yes—I will come back."

Madame Catherine met Isabel below, and conducted her to the door of the parlour, outside of which the two stood talking a minute.

"I won't go in," said the good sister. "Madame Merle is waiting for you."

At this announcement Isabel gave a start, and she was on the point of asking if there were no other egress from the convent. But a moment's reflection assured her that she would do well not to betray to

the worthy nun her desire to avoid Pansy's other visitor. Her companion laid her hand very gently on her arm, and fixing her a moment with a wise, benevolent eye, said to her, speaking French, almost familiarly—

“*Eh bien, chère Madame, qu'en pensez-vous?*”

“About my step-daughter? Oh, it would take long to tell you.”

“We think it's enough,” said Madame Catherine, significantly. And she pushed open the door of the parlour.

Madame Merle was sitting just as Isabel had left her, like a woman so absorbed in thought that she had not moved a little-finger. As Madame Catherine closed the door behind Isabel, she got up, and Isabel saw that she had been thinking to some purpose. She had recovered her balance; she was in full possession of her resources.

“I found that I wished to wait for you,” she said, urbanely. “But it's not to talk about Pansy.”

Isabel wondered what it could be to talk about, and in spite of Madame Merle's declaration she answered after a moment—

“Madame Catherine says it's enough.”

“Yes; it also seems to me enough. I wanted to ask you another word about poor Mr. Touchett,” Madame Merle added. “Have you reason to believe that he is really at his last?”

“I have no information but a telegram. Unfortunately it only confirms a probability.”

“I am going to ask you a strange question,” said Madame Merle. “Are you very fond of your cousin?” And she gave a smile as strange as her question.

"Yes, I am very fond of him. But I don't understand you."

Madame Merle hesitated a moment.

"It is difficult to explain. Something has occurred to me which may not have occurred to you, and I give you the benefit of my idea. Your cousin did you once a great service. Have you never guessed it?"

"He has done me many services."

"Yes; but one was much above the rest. He made you a rich woman."

"*He* made me——?"

Madame Merle appeared to see herself successful, and she went on, more triumphantly—

"He imparted to you that extra lustre which was required to make you a brilliant match. At bottom, it is him that you have to thank." She stopped; there was something in Isabel's eyes.

"I don't understand you. It was my uncle's money."

"Yes; it was your uncle's money; but it was your cousin's idea. He brought his father over to it. Ah, my dear, the sum was large!"

Isabel stood staring; she seemed to-day to be living in a world illumined by lurid flashes.

"I don't know why you say such things! I don't know what you know."

"I know nothing but what I have guessed. But I have guessed that."

Isabel went to the door, and when she had opened it stood a moment with her hand on the latch. Then she said—it was her only revenge—

"I believed it was you I had to thank!"

Madame Merle dropped her eyes; she stood there in a kind of proud penance.

"You are very unhappy, I know. But I am more so."

"Yes; I can believe that. I think I should like never to see you again."

Madame Merle raised her eyes.

"I shall go to America," she announced, while Isabel passed out.

XIV.

It was not with surprise, it was with a feeling which in other circumstances would have had much of the effect of joy, that as Isabel descended from the Paris mail at Charing Cross, she stepped into the arms, as it were—or at any rate into the hands—of Henrietta Stackpole. She had telegraphed to her friend from Turin, and though she had not definitely said to herself that Henrietta would meet her, she had felt that her telegram would produce some helpful result. On her long journey from Rome her mind had been given up to vagueness; she was unable to question the future. She performed this journey with sightless eyes, and took little pleasure in the countries she traversed, decked out though they were in the richest freshness of spring. Her thoughts followed their course through other countries—strange-looking, dimly-lighted, pathless lands, in which there was no change of seasons, but only, as it seemed, a perpetual dreariness of winter. She had plenty to think about; but it was not reflection, nor conscious purpose, that filled her mind. Disconnected visions passed through

it, and sudden dull gleams of memory, of expectation. The past and the future alternated at their will, but she saw them only in fitful images, which came and went by a logic of their own. It was extraordinary the things she remembered. Now that she was in the secret, now that she knew something that so much concerned her, and the eclipse of which had made life resemble an attempt to play whist with an imperfect pack of cards, the truth of things, their mutual relations, their meaning, and for the most part their horror, rose before her with a kind of architectural vastness. She remembered a thousand trifles; they started to life with the spontaneity of a shiver. That is, she had thought them trifles at the time; now she saw that they were leaden-weighted. Yet even now they were trifles, after all; for of what use was it to her to understand them? Nothing seemed of use to her to-day. All purpose, all intention, was suspended; all desire, too, save the single desire to reach her richly-constituted refuge. Gardencourt had been her starting-point, and to those muffled chambers it was at least a temporary solution to return. She had gone forth in her strength; she would come back in her weakness; and if the place had been a rest to her before, it would be a positive sanctuary now. She envied Ralph his dying; for if one were thinking of rest, that was the most perfect of all. To cease utterly, to give it all up and not know anything more—this idea was as sweet as the vision of a cool bath in a marble tank, in a darkened chamber, in a hot land. She had moments, indeed, in her journey from Rome, which were almost as good as being dead. She sat in her corner, so motionless, so passive, simply with

the sense of being carried, so detached from hope and regret, that if her spirit was haunted with sudden pictures, it might have been the spirit disembarrassed of the flesh. There was nothing to regret now—that was all over. Not only the time of her folly, but the time of her repentance seemed far away. The only thing to regret was that Madame Merle had been so—so strange. Just here Isabel's imagination paused, from literal inability to say what it was that Madame Merle had been. Whatever it was, it was for Madame Merle herself to regret it; and doubtless she would do so in America, where she was going. It concerned Isabel no more; she only had an impression that she should never again see Madame Merle. This impression carried her into the future, of which from time to time she had a mutilated glimpse. She saw herself, in the distant years, still in the attitude of a woman who had her life to live, and these intimations contradicted the spirit of the present hour. It might be desirable to die; but this privilege was evidently to be denied her. Deep in her soul—deeper than any appetite for renunciation—was the sense that life would be her business for a long time to come. And at moments there was something inspiring, almost exhilarating, in the conviction. It was a proof of strength—it was a proof that she should some day be happy again. It couldn't be that she was to live only to suffer; she was still young, after all, and a great many things might happen to her yet. To live only to suffer—only to feel the injury of life repeated and enlarged—it seemed to her that she was too valuable, too capable, for that. Then she wondered whether it were vain and stupid to think so well of herself. When

had it ever been a guarantee to be valuable? Was not all history full of the destruction of precious things? Was it not much more probable that if one were delicate one would suffer? It involved then, perhaps, an admission that one had a certain grossness; but Isabel recognised, as it passed before her eyes, the quick, vague shadow of a long future. She should not escape; she should last. Then the middle years wrapped her about again, and the grey curtain of her indifference closed her in.

Henrietta kissed her, as Henrietta usually kissed, as if she were afraid she should be caught doing it; and then Isabel stood there in the crowd, looking about her, looking for her servant. She asked nothing; she wished to wait. She had a sudden perception that she should be helped. She was so glad Henrietta was there; there was something terrible in an arrival in London. The dusky, smoky, far-arching vault of the station, the strange, livid light, the dense, dark, pushing crowd, filled her with a nervous fear and made her put her arm into her friend's. She remembered that she had once liked these things; they seemed part of a mighty spectacle, in which there was something that touched her. She remembered how she walked away from Euston, in the winter dusk, in the crowded streets, five years before. She could not have done that to-day, and the incident came before her as the deed of another person.

"It's too beautiful that you should have come," said Henrietta, looking at her as if she thought Isabel might be prepared to challenge the proposition. "If you hadn't—if you hadn't; well, I don't know," re-

marked Miss Stackpole, hinting ominously at her powers of disapproval.

Isabel looked about, without seeing her maid. Her eyes rested on another figure, however, which she felt that she had seen before; and in a moment she recognised the genial countenance of Mr. Bantling. He stood a little apart, and it was not in the power of the multitude that pressed about him to make him yield an inch of the ground he had taken—that of abstracting himself, discreetly, while the two ladies performed their embraces.

“There’s Mr. Bantling,” said Isabel, gently, irrelevantly, scarcely caring much now whether she should find her maid or not.

“Oh yes, he goes everywhere with me. Come here, Mr. Bantling!” Henrietta exclaimed. Whereupon the gallant bachelor advanced with a smile—a smile tempered, however, by the gravity of the occasion. “Isn’t it lovely that she has come?” Henrietta asked. “He knows all about it,” she added; “we had quite a discussion; he said you wouldn’t; I said you would.”

“I thought you always agreed,” Isabel answered, smiling. She found she could smile now; she had seen in an instant, in Mr. Bantling’s excellent eye, that he had good news for her. It seemed to say that he wished her to remember that he was an old friend of her cousin—that he understood—that it was all right. Isabel gave him her hand; she thought him so kind.

“Oh, I always agree,” said Mr. Bantling. “But she doesn’t, you know.”

“Didn’t I tell you that a maid was a nuisance?”

Henrietta inquired. "Your young lady has probably remained at Calais."

"I don't care," said Isabel, looking at Mr. Bantling, whom she had never thought so interesting.

"Stay with her while I go and see," Henrietta commanded, leaving the two for a moment together.

They stood there at first in silence, and then Mr. Bantling asked Isabel how it had been on the Channel.

"Very fine. No, I think it was rather rough," said Isabel, to her companion's obvious surprise. After which she added, "You have been to Garden-court, I know."

"Now how do you know that?"

"I can't tell you—except that you look like a person who has been there."

"Do you think I look sad? It's very sad there, you know."

"I don't believe you ever look sad. You look kind," said Isabel, with a frankness that cost her no effort. It seemed to her that she should never again feel a superficial embarrassment.

Poor Mr. Bantling, however, was still in this inferior stage. He blushed a good deal, and laughed, and assured her that he was often very blue, and that when he was blue he was awfully fierce.

"You can ask Miss Stackpole, you know," he said. "I was at Gardencourt two days ago."

"Did you see my cousin?"

"Only for a little. But he had been seeing people; Warburton was there the day before. Touchett was just the same as usual, except that he was in bed, and that he looks tremendously ill, and that he can't

“speak,” Mr. Bantling pursued. “He was immensely friendly all the same. He was just as clever as ever. It’s awfully sad.”

Even in the crowded, noisy station this simple picture was vivid. “Was that late in the day?”

“Yes; I went on purpose; we thought you would like to know.”

“I am very much obliged to you. Can I go down to-night?”

“Ah, I don’t think *she*’ll let you go,” said Mr. Bantling. “She wants you to stop with her. I made Touchett’s man promise to telegraph me to-day, and I found the telegram an hour ago at my club. ‘Quiet and easy,’ that’s what it says, and it’s dated two o’clock. So you see you can wait till to-morrow. You must be very tired.”

“Yes, I am very tired. And I thank you again.”

“Oh,” said Mr. Bantling, “we were certain you would like the last news.” While Isabel vaguely noted that after all he and Henrietta seemed to agree.

Miss Stackpole came back with Isabel’s maid, whom she had caught in the act of proving her utility. This excellent person, instead of losing herself in the crowd, had simply attended to her mistress’s luggage, so that now Isabel was at liberty to leave the station.

“You know you are not to think of going to the country to-night,” Henrietta remarked to her. “It doesn’t matter whether there is a train or not. You are to come straight to me, in Wimpole Street. There isn’t a corner to be had in London, but I have got you one all the same. It isn’t a Roman palace, but it will do for a night.”

"I will do whatever you wish," Isabel said.

"You will come and answer a few questions; that's what I wish."

"She doesn't say anything about dinner, does she, Mrs. Osmond?" Mr. Bantling inquired jocosely.

Henrietta fixed him a moment with her speculative gaze. "I see you are in a great hurry to get to your own. You will be at the Paddington station to-morrow morning at ten."

"Don't come for my sake, Mr. Bantling," said Isabel.

"He will come for mine," Henrietta declared, as she ushered Isabel into a cab.

Later, in a large, dusky parlour in Wimpole Street—to do her justice, there had been dinner enough—she asked Isabel those questions to which she had alluded at the station.

"Did your husband make a scene about your coming?" That was Miss Stackpole's first inquiry.

"No; I can't say he made a scene."

"He didn't object then?"

"Yes; he objected very much. But it was not what you would call a scene."

"What was it then?"

"It was a very quiet conversation."

Henrietta for a moment contemplated her friend.

"It must have been awful," she then remarked. And Isabel did not deny that it had been awful. But she confined herself to answering Henrietta's questions, which was easy, as they were tolerably definite. For the present she offered her no new information. "Well," said Miss Stackpole at last, "I have only one criticism to make. I don't see why you promised little Miss Osmond to go back."

"I am not sure that I see myself, now," Isabel replied. "But I did then."

"If you have forgotten your reason perhaps you won't return."

Isabel for a moment said nothing, then—

"Perhaps I shall find another," she rejoined.

"You will certainly never find a good one."

"In default of a better, my having promised will do," Isabel suggested.

"Yes; that's why I hate it."

"Don't speak of it now. I have a little time. Coming away was hard; but going back will be harder still."

"You must remember, after all, that he won't make a scene!" said Henrietta, with much intention.

"He will, though," Isabel answered gravely. "It will not be the scene of a moment; it will be a scene that will last always."

For some minutes the two women sat gazing at this prospect; and then Miss Stackpole, to change the subject, as Isabel had requested, announced abruptly—

"I have been to stay with Lady Pensil!"

"Ah, the letter came at last!"

"Yes; it took five years. But this time she wanted to see me."

"Naturally enough."

"It was more natural than I think you know," said Henrietta, fixing her eyes on a distant point. And then she added, turning suddenly: "Isabel Archer, I beg your pardon. You don't know why? Because I criticised you, and yet I have gone further than you. Mr. Osmond, at least, was born on the other side!"

It was a moment before Isabel perceived her meaning; it was so modestly, or at least so ingeniously, veiled. Isabel's mind was not possessed at present with the comicality of things; but she greeted with a quick laugh the image that her companion had raised. She immediately recovered herself, however, and with a gravity too pathetic to be real—

"Henrietta Stackpole," she asked, "are you going to give up your country?"

"Yes, my poor Isabel, I am. I won't pretend to deny it; I look the fact in the face. I am going to marry Mr. Bantling, and I am going to reside in London."

"It seems very strange," said Isabel, smiling now.

"Well yes, I suppose it does. I have come to it little by little. I think I know what I am doing; but I don't know that I can explain."

"One can't explain one's marriage," Isabel answered. "And yours doesn't need to be explained. Mr. Bantling is very good."

Henrietta said nothing; she seemed lost in reflection.

"He has a beautiful nature," she remarked at last. "I have studied him for many years, and I see right through him. He's as clear as glass—there's no mystery about him. He is not intellectual, but he appreciates intellect. On the other hand he doesn't exaggerate its claims. I sometimes think we do in the United States."

"Ah," said Isabel, "you are changed indeed! It's the first time I have ever heard you say anything against your native land."

"I only say that we are too intellectual; that, after

all, is a glorious fault. But I *am* changed; a woman has to change a good deal to marry."

"I hope you will be very happy. You will at last—over here—see something of the inner life."

Henrietta gave a little significant sigh. "That's the key to the mystery, I believe. I couldn't endure to be kept off. Now I have as good a right as any one!" she added, with artless elation.

Isabel was deeply diverted, but there was a certain melancholy in her view. Henrietta, after all, was human and feminine, Henrietta whom she had hitherto regarded as a light keen flame, a disembodied voice. It was rather a disappointment to find that she had personal susceptibilities, that she was subject to common passions, and that her intimacy with Mr. Bantling had not been completely original. There was a want of originality in her marrying him—there was even a kind of stupidity; and for a moment, to Isabel's sense, the dreariness of the world took on a deeper tinge. A little later, indeed, she reflected that Mr. Bantling, after all, was original. But she didn't see how Henrietta could give up her country. She herself had relaxed her hold of it, but it had never been her country as it had been Henrietta's. She presently asked her if she had enjoyed her visit to Lady Pensil.

"Oh, yes," said Henrietta, "she didn't know what to make of me."

"And was that very enjoyable?"

"Very much so, because she is supposed to be very talented. She thinks she knows everything; but she doesn't understand a lady-correspondent! It would

be so much easier for her if I were only a little better or a little worse. She's so puzzled; I believe she thinks it's my duty to go and do something immoral. She thinks it's immoral that I should marry her brother; but, after all, that isn't immoral enough. And she will never understand—never!”

“She is not so intelligent as her brother, then,” said Isabel. “He appears to have understood.”

“Oh no, he hasn't!” cried Miss Stackpole, with decision. “I really believe that's what he wants to marry me for—just to find out. It's a fixed idea—a kind of fascination.”

“It's very good in you to humour it.”

“Oh well,” said Henrietta, “I have something to find out too!” And Isabel saw that she had not renounced an allegiance, but planned an attack. She was at last about to grapple in earnest with England.

Isabel also perceived, however, on the morrow, at the Paddington station, where she found herself, at two o'clock, in the company both of Miss Stackpole and Mr. Bantling, that the gentleman bore his perplexities lightly. If he had not found out everything, he had found out at least the great point—that Miss Stackpole would not be wanting in initiative. It was evident that in the selection of a wife he had been on his guard against this deficiency.

“Henrietta has told me, and I am very glad,” Isabel said, as she gave him her hand.

“I dare say you think it's very odd,” Mr. Bantling replied, resting on his neat umbrella.

“Yes, I think it's very odd.”

"You can't think it's so odd as I do. But I have always rather liked striking out a line," said Mr. Bantling, serenely.

XV.

ISABEL'S arrival at Gardencourt on this second occasion was even quieter than it had been on the first. Ralph Touchett kept but a small household, and to the new servants Mrs. Osmond was a stranger; so that Isabel, instead of being conducted to her own apartment, was coldly shown into the drawing-room, and left to wait while her name was carried up to her aunt. She waited a long time; Mrs. Touchett appeared to be in no hurry to come to her. She grew impatient at last; she grew nervous and even frightened. The day was dark and cold; the dusk was thick in the corners of the wide brown rooms. The house was perfectly still—a stillness that Isabel remembered; it had filled all the place for days before the death of her uncle. She left the drawing-room and wandered about—strolled into the library and along the gallery of pictures, where, in the deep silence, her footstep made an echo. Nothing was changed; she recognised everything that she had seen years before; it might have been only yesterday that she stood there. She reflected that things change but little, while people change so much, and she became aware that she was walking about as her aunt had done on the day that she came to see her in Albany. She was changed enough since then—that

had been the beginning. It suddenly struck her that if her Aunt Lydia had not come that day in just that way and found her alone, everything might have been different. She might have had another life, and to-day she might have been a happier woman. She stopped in the gallery in front of a small picture—a beautiful and valuable Bonington—upon which her eyes rested for a long time. But she was not looking at the picture; she was wondering whether if her aunt had not come that day in Albany she would have married Caspar Goodwood.

Mrs. Touchett appeared at last, just after Isabel had returned to the big uninhabited drawing-room. She looked a good deal older, but her eye was as bright as ever and her head as erect; her thin lips seemed a repository of latent meanings. She wore a little grey dress, of the most undecorated fashion, and Isabel wondered, as she had wondered the first time, whether her remarkable kinswoman resembled more a queen-regent or the matron of a gaol. Her lips felt very thin indeed as Isabel kissed her.

“I have kept you waiting because I have been sitting with Ralph,” Mrs. Touchett said. “The nurse had gone to her lunch and I had taken her place. He has a man who is supposed to look after him, but the man is good for nothing; he is always looking out of the window—as if there were anything to see! I didn’t wish to move, because Ralph seemed to be sleeping, and I was afraid the sound would disturb him. I waited till the nurse came back; I remembered that you knew the house.”

“I find I know it better even than I thought; I

have been walking," Isabel answered. And then she asked whether Ralph slept much.

"He lies with his eyes closed; he doesn't move. But I am not sure that it's always sleep."

"Will he see me? Can he speak to me?"

Mrs. Touchett hesitated a moment. "You can try him," she said. And then she offered to conduct Isabel to her room. "I thought they had taken you there; but it's not my house, it's Ralph's; and I don't know what they do. They must at least have taken your luggage; I don't suppose you have brought much. Not that I care, however. I believe they have given you the same room you had before; when Ralph heard you were coming he said you must have that one."

"Did he say anything else?"

"Ah, my dear, he doesn't chatter as he used!" cried Mrs. Touchett, as she preceded her niece up the staircase.

It was the same room, and something told Isabel that it had not been slept in since she occupied it. Her luggage was there, and it was not voluminous; Mrs. Touchett sat down a moment, with her eyes upon it.

"Is there really no hope?" Isabel asked, standing before her aunt.

"None whatever. There never has been. It has not been a successful life."

"No—it has only been a beautiful one." Isabel found herself already contradicting her aunt; she was irritated by her dryness.

"I don't know what you mean by that; there is no

beauty without health. That is a very odd dress to travel in."

Isabel glanced at her garment. "I left Rome at an hour's notice; I took the first that came."

"Your sisters, in America, wished to know how you dress. That seemed to be their principal interest. I wasn't able to tell them—but they seemed to have the right idea: that you never wear anything less than black brocade."

"They think I am more brilliant than I am; I am afraid to tell them the truth," said Isabel. "Lily wrote me that you had dined with her."

"She invited me four times, and I went once. After the second time she should have let me alone. The dinner was very good; it must have been expensive. Her husband has a very bad manner. Did I enjoy my visit to America? Why should I have enjoyed it? I didn't go for my pleasure."

These were interesting items, but Mrs. Touchett soon left her niece, whom she was to meet in half-an-hour at the midday meal. At this repast the two ladies faced each other at an abbreviated table in the melancholy dining-room. Here, after a little, Isabel saw that her aunt was not so dry as she appeared, and her old pity for the poor woman's inexpressiveness, her want of regret, of disappointment, came back to her. It seemed to her she would find it a blessing to-day to be able to indulge a regret. She wondered whether Mrs. Touchett were not trying, whether she had not a desire for the recreation of grief. On the other hand, perhaps, she was afraid; if she began to regret, it might take her too far. Isabel could perceive, however, that it had come over her that she

had missed something, that she saw herself in the future as an old woman without memories. Her little sharp face looked tragical. She told her niece that Ralph as yet had not moved, but that he probably would be able to see her before dinner. And then in a moment she added that he had seen Lord Warburton the day before; an announcement which startled Isabel a little, as it seemed an intimation that this personage was in the neighbourhood and that an accident might bring them together. Such an accident would not be happy; she had not come to England to converse with Lord Warburton. She presently said to her aunt that he had been very kind to Ralph; she had seen something of that in Rome.

"He has something else to think of now," Mrs. Touchett rejoined. And she paused, with a gaze like a gimlet.

Isabel saw that she meant something, and instantly guessed what she meant. But her reply concealed her guess; her heart beat faster, and she wished to gain a moment. "Ah yes—the House of Lords, and all that."

"He is not thinking of the Lords; he is thinking of the ladies. At least he is thinking of one of them; he told Ralph he was engaged to be married."

"Ah, to be married!" Isabel gently exclaimed.

"Unless he breaks it off. He seemed to think Ralph would like to know. Poor Ralph can't go to the wedding, though I believe it is to take place very soon."

"And who is the young lady?"

"A member of the aristocracy; Lady Flora, Lady Felicia—something of that sort."

"I am very glad," Isabel said. "It must be a sudden decision."

"Sudden enough, I believe; a courtship of three weeks. It has only just been made public."

"I am very glad," Isabel repeated, with a larger emphasis. She knew her aunt was watching her—looking for the signs of some curious emotion, and the desire to prevent her companion from seeing anything of this kind enabled her to speak in the tone of quick satisfaction—the tone, almost, of relief. Mrs. Touchett of course followed the tradition that ladies, even married ones, regard the marriage of their old lovers as an offence to themselves. Isabel's first care therefore was to show that however that might be in general, she was not offended now. But meanwhile, as I say, her heart beat faster; and if she sat for some moments thoughtful—she presently forgot Mrs. Touchett's observation—it was not because she had lost an admirer. Her imagination had traversed half Europe; it halted, panting, and even trembling a little, in the city of Rome. She figured herself announcing to her husband that Lord Warburton was to lead a bride to the altar, and she was of course not aware how extremely sad she looked while she made this intellectual effort. But at last she collected herself, and said to her aunt—"He was sure to do it some time or other."

Mrs. Touchett was silent; then she gave a sharp little shake of the head. "Ah, my dear, you're beyond me!" she cried, suddenly. They went on with their luncheon in silence; Isabel felt as if she had heard of Lord Warburton's death. She had known him only as a suitor, and now that was all over. He was dead

for poor Pansy; by Pansy he might have lived. A servant had been hovering about; at last Mrs. Touchett requested him to leave them alone. She had finished her lunch; she sat with her hands folded on the edge of the table. "I should like to ask you three questions," she said to Isabel, when the servant had gone.

"Three are a great many."

"I can't do with less; I have been thinking. They are all very good ones."

"That's what I am afraid of. The best questions are the worst," Isabel answered. Mrs. Touchett had pushed back her chair, and Isabel left the table and walked, rather consciously, to one of the deep windows, while her aunt followed her with her eyes.

"Have you ever been sorry you didn't marry Lord Warburton?" Mrs. Touchett inquired.

Isabel shook her head slowly, smiling. "No, dear aunt."

"Good. I ought to tell you that I propose to believe what you say."

"Your believing me is an immense temptation," Isabel replied, smiling still.

"A temptation to lie? I don't recommend you to do that, for when I'm misinformed I'm as dangerous as a poisoned rat. I don't mean to crow over you."

"It is my husband that doesn't get on with me," said Isabel.

"I could have told him that. I don't call that crowing over *you*," Mrs. Touchett added. "Do you still like Serena Merle?" she went on.

"Not as I once did. But it doesn't matter, for she is going to America."

"To America? She must have done something very bad."

"Yes—very bad."

"May I ask what it is?"

"She made a convenience of me."

"Ah," cried Mrs. Touchett, "so she did of me! She does of every one."

"She will make a convenience of America," said Isabel, smiling again, and glad that her aunt's questions were over.

It was not till the evening that she was able to see Ralph. He had been dozing all day; at least he had been lying unconscious. The doctor was there, but after a while he went away; the local doctor, who had attended his father, and whom Ralph liked. He came three or four times a day; he was deeply interested in his patient. Ralph had had Sir Matthew Hope, but he had got tired of this celebrated man, to whom he had asked his mother to send word that he was now dead, and was therefore without further need of medical advice. Mrs. Touchett had simply written to Sir Matthew that her son disliked him. On the day of Isabel's arrival Ralph gave no sign, as I have related, for many hours; but towards evening he raised himself and said he knew that she had come. How he knew it was not apparent; inasmuch as, for fear of exciting him, no one had offered the information. Isabel came in and sat by his bed in the dim light; there was only a shaded candle in a corner of the room. She told the nurse that she might go—that she herself would sit with him for the rest of the evening. He had opened his eyes and recognised her, and had moved his hand, which lay very helpless

beside him, so that she might take it. But he was unable to speak; he closed his eyes again and remained perfectly still, only keeping her hand in his own. She sat with him a long time—till the nurse came back; but he gave no further sign. He might have passed away while she looked at him; he was already the figure and pattern of death. She had thought him far gone in Rome, but this was worse; there was only one change possible now. There was a strange tranquillity in his face; it was as still as the lid of a box. With this, he was a mere lattice of bones; when he opened his eyes to greet her, it was as if she were looking into immeasurable space. It was not till midnight that the nurse came back; but the hours, to Isabel, had not seemed long; it was exactly what she had come for. If she had come simply to wait, she found ample occasion, for he lay for three days in a kind of grateful silence. He recognised her, and at moments he seemed to wish to speak; but he found no voice. Then he closed his eyes again, as if he too were waiting for something—for something that certainly would come. He was so absolutely quiet that it seemed to her what was coming had already arrived; and yet she never lost the sense that they were still together. But they were not always together; there were other hours that she passed in wandering through the empty house and listening for a voice that was not poor Ralph's. She had a constant fear; she thought it possible her husband would write to her. But he remained silent, and she only got a letter from Florence from the Countess Gemini. Ralph, however, spoke at last, on the evening of the third day.

"I feel better to-night," he murmured, abruptly, in the soundless dimness of her vigil; "I think I can say something."

She sank upon her knees beside his pillow; took his thin hand in her own; begged him not to make an effort—not to tire himself.

His face was of necessity serious—it was incapable of the muscular play of a smile; but its owner apparently had not lost a perception of incongruities. "What does it matter if I am tired, when I have all eternity to rest?" he asked. "There is no harm in making an effort when it is the very last. Don't people always feel better just before the end? I have often heard of that; it's what I was waiting for. Ever since you have been here; I thought it would come. I tried two or three times; I was afraid you would get tired of sitting there." He spoke slowly, with painful breaks and long pauses; his voice seemed to come from a distance. When he ceased, he lay with his face turned to Isabel, and his large unwinking eyes open into her own. "It was very good of you to come," he went on. "I thought you would; but I wasn't sure."

"I was not sure either, till I came," said Isabel.

"You have been like an angel beside my bed. You know they talk about the angel of death. It's the most beautiful of all. You have been like that; as if you were waiting for me."

"I was not waiting for your death; I was waiting for—for this. This is not death, dear Ralph."

"Not for you—no. There is nothing makes us feel so much alive as to see others die. That's the sensation of life—the sense that we remain. I have

had it—even I. But now I am of no use but to give it to others. With me it's all over." And then he paused. Isabel bowed her head further, till it rested on the two hands that were clasped upon his own. She could not see him now; but his far-away voice was close to her ear. "Isabel," he went on, suddenly, "I wish it were over for you." She answered nothing; she had burst into sobs; she remained so, with her buried face. He lay silent, listening to her sobs; at last he gave a long groan. "Ah, what is it you have done for me?"

"What is it you did for me?" she cried, her now extreme agitation half smothered by her attitude. She had lost all her shame, all wish to hide things. Now he might know; she wished him to know, for it brought them supremely together, and he was beyond the reach of pain. "You did something once—you know it. Oh Ralph, you have been everything! What have I done for you—what can I do to-day? I would die if you could live. But I don't wish you to live; I would die myself, not to lose you." Her voice was as broken as his own, and full of tears and anguish.

"You won't lose me—you will keep me. Keep me in your heart; I shall be nearer to you than I have ever been. Dear Isabel, life is better; for in life there is love. Death is good—but there is no love."

"I never thanked you—I never spoke—I never was what I should be!" Isabel went on. She felt a passionate need to cry out and accuse herself, to let her sorrow possess her. All her troubles, for the moment, became single and melted together into this present pain. "What must you have thought of me?"

Yet how could I know? I never knew, and I only know to-day because there are people less stupid than I."

"Don't mind people," said Ralph. "I think I am glad to leave people."

She raised her head and her clasped hands; she seemed for a moment to pray to him.

"Is it true—is it true?" she asked.

"True that you have been stupid? Oh no," said Ralph, with a sensible intention of wit.

"That you made me rich—that all I have is yours?"

He turned away his head, and for some time said nothing. Then at last—

"Ah, don't speak of that—that was not happy." Slowly he moved his face toward her again, and they once more saw each other. "But for that—but for that—" And he paused. "I believe I ruined you," he added softly.

She was full of the sense that he was beyond the reach of pain; he seemed already so little of this world. But even if she had not had it she would still have spoken, for nothing mattered now but the only knowledge that was not pure anguish—the knowledge that they were looking at the truth together.

"He married me for my money," she said.

She wished to say everything; she was afraid he might die before she had done so.

He gazed at her a little, and for the first time his fixed eyes lowered their lids. But he raised them in a moment, and then—

"He was greatly in love with you," he answered.

"Yes, he was in love with me. But he would not have married me if I had been poor. I don't hurt you in saying that. How can I? I only want you to understand. I always tried to keep you from understanding; but that's all over."

"I always understood," said Ralph.

"I thought you did, and I didn't like it. But now I like it."

"You don't hurt me—you make me very happy." And as Ralph said this there was an extraordinary gladness in his voice. She bent her head again, and pressed her lips to the back of his hand. "I always understood," he continued, "though it was so strange—so pitiful. You wanted to look at life for yourself—but you were not allowed; you were punished for your wish. You were ground in the very mill of the conventional!"

"Oh yes, I have been punished," Isabel sobbed.

He listened to her a little, and then continued—

"Was he very bad about your coming?"

"He made it very hard for me. But I don't care."

"It is all over, then, between you?"

"Oh no; I don't think anything is over."

"Are you going back to him?" Ralph stammered.

"I don't know—I can't tell. I shall stay here as long as I may. I don't want to think—I needn't think. I don't care for anything but you, and that is enough for the present. It will last a little yet. Here on my knees, with you dying in my arms, I am happier than I have been for a long time. And I want you to be happy—not to think of anything sad; only to feel that I am near you and I love you. Why should

there be pain? In such hours as this what have we to do with pain? That is not the deepest thing; there is something deeper."

Ralph evidently found, from moment to moment, greater difficulty in speaking; he had to wait longer to collect himself. At first he appeared to make no response to these last words; he let a long time elapse. Then he murmured simply—

"You must stay here."

"I should like to stay, as long as seems right."

"As seems right—as seems right?" He repeated her words. "Yes, you think a great deal about that."

"Of course one must. You are very tired," said Isabel.

"I am very tired. You said just now that pain is not the deepest thing. No—no. But it is very deep. If I could stay——"

"For me you will always be here," she softly interrupted. It was easy to interrupt him.

But he went on, after a moment—

"It passes, after all; it's passing now. But love remains. I don't know why we should suffer so much. Perhaps I shall find out. There are many things in life; you are very young."

"I feel very old," said Isabel.

"You will grow young again. That's how I see you. I don't believe—I don't believe——" And he stopped again; his strength failed him.

She begged him to be quiet now. "We needn't speak to understand each other," she said.

"I don't believe that such a generous mistake as yours—can hurt you for more than a little."

"Oh, Ralph, I am very happy now," she cried, through her tears.

"And remember this," he continued, "that if you have been hated, you have also been loved."

"Ah, my brother!" she cried, with a movement of still deeper prostration.

XVI.

HE had told her, the first evening she ever spent at Gardencourt, that if she should live to suffer enough she might some day see the ghost with which the old house was duly provided. She apparently had fulfilled the necessary condition; for the next morning, in the cold, faint dawn, she knew that a spirit was standing by her bed. She had lain down without undressing, for it was her belief that Ralph would not outlast the night. She had no inclination to sleep; she was waiting, and such waiting was wakeful. But she closed her eyes; she believed that as the night wore on she should hear a knock at her door. She heard no knock, but at the time the darkness began vaguely to grow grey, she started up from her pillow as abruptly as if she had received a summons. It seemed to her for an instant that Ralph was standing there—a dim, hovering figure in the dimness of the room. She stared a moment; she saw his white face—his kind eyes; then she saw there was nothing. She was not afraid; she was only sure. She went out of her room, and in her certainty passed through dark corridors and down a flight of oaken steps that shone in the vague light of a hall-window. Outside of Ralph's door she stopped a moment, listening; but she seemed to hear only the hush that filled it. She opened the door with a hand as gentle as if she were lifting

a veil from the face of the dead, and saw Mrs. Touchett sitting motionless and upright beside the couch of her son, with one of his hands in her own. The doctor was on the other side, with poor Ralph's further wrist resting in his professional fingers. The nurse was at the foot, between them. Mrs. Touchett took no notice of Isabel, but the doctor looked at her very hard; then he gently placed Ralph's hand in a proper position, close beside him. The nurse looked at her very hard too, and no one said a word; but Isabel only looked at what she had come to see. It was fairer than Ralph had ever been in life, and there was a strange resemblance to the face of his father, which, six years before, she had seen lying on the same pillow. She went to her aunt and put her arm round her; and Mrs. Touchett, who as a general thing neither invited nor enjoyed caresses, submitted for a moment to this one, rising, as it were, to take it. But she was stiff and dry-eyed; her acute white face was terrible.

"Poor Aunt Lydia," Isabel murmured.

"Go and thank God you have no child," said Mrs. Touchett, disengaging herself.

Three days after this a considerable number of people found time, in the height of the London "season," to take a morning train down to a quiet station in Berkshire and spend half-an-hour in a small grey church, which stood within an easy walk. It was in the green burial-place of this edifice that Mrs. Touchett consigned her son to earth. She stood herself at the edge of the grave, and Isabel stood beside her; the sexton himself had not a more practical interest in the scene than Mrs. Touchett. It was a solemn occasion, but it was not a disagreeable one;

there was a certain geniality in the appearance of things. The weather had changed to fair; the day, one of the last of the treacherous May-time, was warm and windless, and the air had the brightness of the hawthorn and the blackbird. If it was sad to think of poor Touchett, it was not too sad, since death, for him, had had no violence. He had been dying so long; he was so ready; everything had been so expected and prepared. There were tears in Isabel's eyes, but they were not tears that blinded. She looked through them at the beauty of the day, the splendour of nature, the sweetness of the old English churchyard, the bowed heads of good friends. Lord Warburton was there, and a group of gentlemen unknown to Isabel, several of whom, as she afterwards learned, were connected with the bank; and there were others whom she knew. Miss Stackpole was among the first, with honest Mr. Bantling beside her; and Caspar Goodwood, lifting his head higher than the rest—bowing it rather less. During much of the time Isabel was conscious of Mr. Goodwood's gaze; he looked at her somewhat harder than he usually looked in public, while the others had fixed their eyes upon the churchyard turf. But she never let him see that she saw him; she thought of him only to wonder that he was still in England. She found that she had taken for granted that after accompanying Ralph to Gardencourt he had gone away; she remembered that it was not a country that pleased him. He was there, however, very distinctly there; and something in his attitude seemed to say that he was there with a complex intention. She would not meet his eyes, though there was doubtless sympathy in them; he made her rather

uneasy. With the dispersal of the little group he disappeared, and the only person who came to speak to her—though several spoke to Mrs. Touchett—was Henrietta Stackpole. Henrietta had been crying.

Ralph had said to Isabel that he hoped she would remain at Gardencourt, and she made no immediate motion to leave the place. She said to herself that it was but common charity to stay a little with her aunt. It was fortunate she had so good a formula; otherwise she might have been greatly in want of one. Her errand was over; she had done what she left her husband for. She had a husband in a foreign city, counting the hours of her absence; in such a case one needed an excellent motive. He was not one of the best husbands; but that didn't alter the case. Certain obligations were involved in the very fact of marriage, and were quite independent of the quantity of enjoyment extracted from it. Isabel thought of her husband as little as might be; but now that she was at a distance, beyond its spell, she thought with a kind of spiritual shudder of Rome. There was a deadly sadness in the thought, and she drew back into the deepest shade of Gardencourt. She lived from day to day, postponing, closing her eyes, trying not to think. She knew she must decide, but she decided nothing; her coming itself had not been a decision. On that occasion she had simply started. Osmond gave no sound, and now evidently he would give none; he would leave it all to her. From Pansy she heard nothing, but that was very simple; her father had told her not to write.

Mrs. Touchett accepted Isabel's company, but offered her no assistance; she appeared to be ab-

sorbed in considering, without enthusiasm, but with perfect lucidity, the new conveniences of her own situation. Mrs. Touchett was not an optimist, but even from painful occurrences she managed to extract a certain satisfaction. This consisted in the reflection that, after all, such things happened to other people and not to herself. Death was disagreeable, but in this case it was her son's death, not her own; she had never flattered herself that her own would be disagreeable to any one but Mrs. Touchett. She was better off than poor Ralph, who had left all the commodities of life behind him, and indeed all the security; for the worst of dying was, to Mrs. Touchett's mind, that it exposed one to be taken advantage of. For herself, she was on the spot; there was nothing so good as that. She made known to Isabel very punctually—it was the evening her son was buried—several of Ralph's testamentary arrangements. He had told her everything, had consulted her about everything. He left her no money; of course she had no need of money. He left her the furniture of Garden-court, exclusive of the pictures and books, and the use of the place for a year; after which it was to be sold. The money produced by the sale was to constitute an endowment for a hospital for poor persons suffering from the malady of which he died; and of this portion of the will Lord Warburton was appointed executor. The rest of his property, which was to be withdrawn from the bank, was disposed of in various bequests, several of them to those cousins in Vermont to whom his father had already been so bountiful. Then there were a number of small legacies.

"Some of them are extremely peculiar," said Mrs.

Touchett; "he has left considerable sums to persons I never heard of. He gave me a list, and I asked then who some of them were, and he told me they were people who at various times had seemed to like him. Apparently he thought you didn't like him, for he has not left you a penny. It was his opinion that you were handsomely treated by his father, which I am bound to say I think you were—though I don't mean that I ever heard him complain of it. The pictures are to be dispersed; he has distributed them about, one by one, as little keepsakes. The most valuable of the collection goes to Lord Warburton. And what do you think he has done with his library? It sounds like a practical joke. He has left it to your friend Miss Stackpole—'in recognition of her services to literature.' Does he mean her following him up from Rome? Was that a service to literature? It contains a great many rare and valuable books, and as she can't carry it about the world in her trunk, he recommends her to sell it at auction. She will sell it of course at Christie's, and with the proceeds she will set up a newspaper. Will that be a service to literature?"

This question Isabel forbore to answer, as it exceeded the little interrogatory to which she had deemed it necessary to submit on her arrival. Besides, she had never been less interested in literature than to-day, as she found when she occasionally took down from the shelf one of the rare and valuable volumes of which Mrs. Touchett had spoken. She was quite unable to read; her attention had never been so little at her command. One afternoon, in the library, about a week after the ceremony in the churchyard, she

was trying to fix it a little; but her eyes often wandered from the book in her hand to the open window, which looked down the long avenue. It was in this way that she saw a modest vehicle approach the door, and perceived Lord Warburton sitting, in rather an uncomfortable attitude, in a corner of it. He had always had a high standard of courtesy, and it was therefore not remarkable, under the circumstances, that he should have taken the trouble to come down from London to call upon Mrs. Touchett. It was of course Mrs. Touchett that he had come to see, and not Mrs. Osmond; and to prove to herself the validity of this theory, Isabel presently stepped out of the house and wandered away into the park. Since her arrival at Gardencourt she had been but little out of doors, the weather being unfavourable for visiting the grounds. This evening, however, was fine, and at first it struck her as a happy thought to have come out. The theory I have just mentioned was plausible enough, but it brought her little rest, and if you had seen her pacing about, you would have said she had a bad conscience. She was not pacified when at the end of a quarter of an hour, finding herself in view of the house, she saw Mrs. Touchett emerge from the portico, accompanied by her visitor. Her aunt had evidently proposed to Lord Warburton that they should come in search of her. She was in no humour for visitors, and if she had had time she would have drawn back, behind one of the great trees. But she saw that she had been seen and that nothing was left her but to advance. As the lawn at Gardencourt was a vast expanse, this took some time; during which she observed that, as he walked beside his hostess, Lord

Warburton kept his hands rather stiffly behind him and his eyes upon the ground. Both persons apparently were silent; but Mrs. Touchett's thin little glance, as she directed it toward Isabel, had even at a distance an expression. It seemed to say, with cutting sharpness, "Here is the eminently amenable nobleman whom you might have married!" When Lord Warburton lifted his own eyes, however, that was not what they said. They only said, "This is rather awkward, you know, and I depend upon you to help me." He was very grave, very proper, and for the first time since Isabel had known him, he greeted her without a smile. Even in his days of distress he had always begun with a smile. He looked extremely self-conscious.

"Lord Warburton has been so good as to come out to see me," said Mrs. Touchett. "He tells me he didn't know you were still here. I know he's an old friend of yours, and as I was told you were not in the house, I brought him out to see for himself."

"Oh, I saw there was a good train at 6.40, that would get me back in time for dinner," Mrs. Touchett's companion explained, rather irrelevantly. "I am so glad to find you have not gone."

"I am not here for long, you know," Isabel said, with a certain eagerness.

"I suppose not; but I hope it's for some weeks. You came to England sooner than—a—than you thought?"

"Yes, I came very suddenly."

Mrs. Touchett turned away, as if she were looking at the condition of the grounds, which indeed was not what it should be; while Lord Warburton hesitated

a little. Isabel fancied he had been on the point of asking about her husband—rather confusedly—and then had checked himself. He continued immitigably grave, either because he thought it becoming in a place over which death had just passed, or for more personal reasons. If he was conscious of personal reasons, it was very fortunate that he had the cover of the former motive; he could make the most of that. Isabel thought of all this. It was not that his face was sad, for that was another matter; but it was strangely inexpressive.

“My sisters would have been so glad to come if they had known you were still here—if they had thought you would see them,” Lord Warburton went on. “Do kindly let them see you before you leave England.”

“It would give me great pleasure; I have such a friendly recollection of them.”

“I don’t know whether you would come to Lockleigh for a day or two? You know there is always that old promise.” And his lordship blushed a little as he made this suggestion, which gave his face a somewhat more familiar air. “Perhaps I’m not right in saying that just now; of course you are not thinking of visiting. But I meant what would hardly be a visit. My sisters are to be at Lockleigh at Whitsuntide for three days; and if you could come then—as you say you are not to be very long in England—I would see that there should be literally no one else.”

Isabel wondered whether not even the young lady he was to marry would be there with her mamma; but she did not express this idea. “Thank you ex-

tremely," she contented herself with saying; "I'm afraid I hardly know about Whitsuntide."

"But I have your promise—haven't I?—for some other time."

There was an interrogation in this; but Isabel let it pass. She looked at her interlocutor a moment, and the result of her observation was that—as had happened before—she felt sorry for him. "Take care you don't miss your train," she said. And then she added, "I wish you every happiness."

He blushed again, more than before, and he looked at his watch.

"Ah yes, 6.40; I haven't much time, but I have a fly at the door. Thank you very much." It was not apparent whether the thanks applied to her having reminded him of his train, or to the more sentimental remark. "Good-bye, Mrs. Osmond; good-bye." He shook hands with her, without meeting her eye, and then he turned to Mrs. Touchett, who had wandered back to them. With her his parting was equally brief; and in a moment the two ladies saw him move with long steps across the lawn.

"Are you very sure he is to be married?" Isabel asked of her aunt.

"I can't be surer than he; but he seems sure. I congratulated him, and he accepted it."

"Ah," said Isabel, "I give it up!"—while her aunt returned to the house and to those avocations which the visitor had interrupted.

She gave it up, but she still thought of it—thought of it while she strolled again under the great oaks whose shadows were long upon the acres of turf. At the end of a few minutes she found herself near a

rustic bench, which, a moment after she had looked at it, struck her as an object recognised. It was not simply that she had seen it before, nor even that she had sat upon it; it was that in this spot something important had happened to her—that the place had an air of association. Then she remembered that she had been sitting there six years before, when a servant brought her from the house the letter in which Caspar Goodwood informed her that he had followed her to Europe; and that when she had read that letter she looked up to hear Lord Warburton announcing that he should like to marry her. It was indeed an historical, an interesting, bench; she stood and looked at it as if it might have something to say to her. She would not sit down on it now—she felt rather afraid of it. She only stood before it, and while she stood, the past came back to her in one of those rushing waves of emotion by which people of sensibility are visited at odd hours. The effect of this agitation was a sudden sense of being very tired, under the influence of which she overcame her scruples and sank into the rustic seat. I have said that she was restless and unable to occupy herself; and whether or no, if you had seen her there, you would have admitted the justice of the former epithet, you would at least have allowed that at this moment she was the image of a victim of idleness. Her attitude had a singular absence of purpose; her hands, hanging at her sides, lost themselves in the folds of her black dress; her eyes gazed vaguely before her. There was nothing to recall her to the house, the two ladies, in their seclusion, dined early and had tea at an indefinite hour. How long she had sat in this position

she could not have told you; but the twilight had grown thick when she became aware that she was not alone. She quickly straightened herself, glancing about, and then saw what had become of her solitude. She was sharing it with Caspar Goodwood, who stood looking at her, a few feet off, and whose footfall, on the unresonant turf, as he came near, she had not heard. It occurred to her, in the midst of this, that it was just so Lord Warburton had surprised her of old.

She instantly rose, and as soon as Goodwood saw that he was seen he started forward. She had had time only to rise, when with a motion that looked like violence, but felt like—she knew not what—he grasped her by the wrist and made her sink again into the seat. She closed her eyes; he had not hurt her, it was only a touch that she had obeyed. But there was something in his face that she wished not to see. That was the way he had looked at her the other day in the churchyard; only to-day it was worse. He said nothing at first; she only felt him close to her. It almost seemed to her that no one had ever been so close to her as that. All this, however, took but a moment, at the end of which she had disengaged her wrist, turning her eyes upon her visitant.

“You have frightened me,” she said.

“I didn’t mean to,” he answered, “but if I did a little, no matter. I came from London a while ago by the train, but I couldn’t come here directly. There was a man at the station who got ahead of me. He took a fly that was there, and I heard him give the order to drive here. I don’t know who he was, but I didn’t want to come with him; I wanted to see you

alone. So I have been waiting and walking about. I have walked all over, and I was just coming to the house when I saw you here. There was a keeper, or some one, who met me; but that was all right, because I had made his acquaintance when I came here with your cousin. Is that gentleman gone? are you really alone? I want to speak to you." Goodwood spoke very fast; he was as excited as when they parted in Rome. Isabel had hoped that condition would subside; and she shrank into herself as she perceived that, on the contrary, he had only let out sail. She had a new sensation; he had never produced it before; it was a feeling of danger. There was indeed something awful in his persistency. Isabel gazed straight before her; he with a hand on each knee, leaned forward, looking deeply into her face. The twilight seemed to darken around them. "I want to speak to you," he repeated; "I have something particular to say. I don't want to trouble you—as I did the other day, in Rome. That was no use; it only distressed you. I couldn't help it; I knew I was wrong. But I am not wrong now; please don't think I am," he went on, with his hard, deep voice melting a moment into entreaty. "I came here to-day for a purpose! it's very different. It was no use for me to speak to you then; but now I can help you."

She could not have told you whether it was because she was afraid, or because such a voice in the darkness seemed of necessity a boon; but she listened to him as she had never listened before; his words dropped deep into her soul. They produced a sort of stillness in all her being; and it was with an effort, in a moment, that she answered him.

"How can you help me?" she asked, in a low tone; as if she were taking what he had said seriously enough to make the inquiry in confidence.

"By inducing you to trust me. Now I know—to-day I know.—Do you remember what I asked you in Rome? Then I was quite in the dark. But to-day I know on good authority; everything is clear to me to-day. It was a good thing, when you made me come away with your cousin. He was a good fellow—he was a noble fellow—he told me how the case stands. He explained everything; he guessed what I thought of you. He was a member of your family, and he left you—so long as you should be in England—to my care," said Goodwood, as if he were making a great point. "Do you know what he said to me the last time I saw him—as he lay there where he died? He said—'Do everything you can for her; do everything she will let you.'"

Isabel suddenly got up. "You had no business to talk about me!"

"Why not—why not, when we talked in that way?" he demanded, following her fast. "And he was dying—when a man's dying it's different. She checked the movement she had made to leave him; she was listening more than ever; it was true that he was not the same as that last time. That had been aimless, fruitless passion; but at present he had an idea. Isabel scented his idea in all her being. "But it doesn't matter!" he exclaimed, pressing her close, though now without touching a hem of her garment. If Touchett had never opened his mouth, I should have known all the same. I had only to look at you at your cousin's funeral to see what's the matter with

you. You can't deceive me any more; for God's sake be honest with a man who is so honest with you. You are the most unhappy of women, and your husband's a devil!"

She turned on him as if he had struck her. "Are you mad?" she cried.

"I have never been so sane; I see the whole thing. Don't think it's necessary to defend him. But I won't say another word against him; I will speak only of you," Goodwood added, quickly. "How can you pretend you are not heart-broken? You don't know what to do—you don't know where to turn. It's too late to play a part; didn't you leave all that behind you in Rome? Touchett knew all about it—and I knew it too—what it would cost you to come here. It will cost you your life? When I know that, how can I keep myself from wishing to save you? What would you think of me if I should stand still and see you go back to your reward? 'It's awful, what she'll have to pay for it!'—that's what Touchett said to me. I may tell you that, mayn't I? He was such a near relation!" cried Goodwood, making his point again. "I would sooner have been shot than let another man say those things to me; but he was different; he seemed to me to have the right. It was after he got home—when he saw he was dying, and when I saw it too. I understand all about it; you are afraid to go back. You are perfectly alone; you don't know where to turn. Now it is that I want you to think of me."

"To think of you?" Isabel said, standing before him in the dusk. The idea of which she had caught a glimpse a few moments before now loomed large.

She threw back her head a little; she stared at it as if it had been a comet in the sky.

"You don't know where to turn; turn to me! I want to persuade you to trust me," Goodwood repeated. And then he paused a moment, with his shining eyes. "Why should you go back—why should you go through that ghastly form?"

"To get away from you!" she answered. But this expressed only a little of what she felt. The rest was that she had never been loved before. It wrapped her about; it lifted her off her feet.

At first, in rejoinder to what she had said, it seemed to her that he would break out into greater violence. But after an instant he was perfectly quiet; he wished to prove that he was sane, that he had reasoned it all out. "I wish to prevent that, and I think I may, if you will only listen to me. It's too monstrous to think of sinking back into that misery. It's you that are out of your mind. Trust me as if I had the care of you. Why shouldn't we be happy—when it's here before us, when it's so easy? I am yours for ever—for ever and ever. Here I stand; I'm as firm as a rock. What have you to care about? You have no children; that perhaps would be an obstacle. As it is, you have nothing to consider. You must save what you can of your life; you mustn't lose it all simply because you have lost a part. It would be an insult to you to assume that you care for the look of the thing—for what people will say—for the bottomless idiocy of the world! We have nothing to do with all that; we are quite out of it; we look at things as they are. You took the great step in coming away; the next is nothing; it's the natural one.

I swear, as I stand here, that a woman deliberately made to suffer is justified in anything in life—in going down into the streets, if that will help her! I know how you suffer, and that's why I am here. We can do absolutely as we please; to whom under the sun do we owe anything? What is it that holds us—what is it that has the smallest right to interfere in such a question as this? Such a question is between ourselves—and to say that is to settle it! Were we born to rot in our misery—were we born to be afraid? I never knew *you* afraid! If you only trust me, how little you will be disappointed! The world is all before us—and the world is very large. I know something about that."

Isabel gave a long murmur, like a creature in pain; it was as if he were pressing something that hurt her. "The world is very small," she said, at random; she had an immense desire to appear to resist. She said it at random, to hear herself say something; but it was not what she meant. The world, in truth, had never seemed so large; it seemed to open out, all round her, to take the form of a mighty sea, where she floated in fathomless waters. She had wanted help, and here was help; it had come in a rushing torrent. I know not whether she believed everything that he said; but she believed that to let him take her in his arms would be the next best thing to dying. This belief, for a moment, was a kind of rapture, in which she felt herself sinking and sinking. In the movement she seemed to beat with her feet, in order to catch herself, to feel something to rest on.

"Ah, be mine as I am yours!" she heard her com-

panion cry. He had suddenly given up argument, and his voice seemed to come through a confusion of sound.

This however, of course, was but a subjective fact, as the metaphysicians say; the confusion, the noise of waters, and all the rest of it, were in her own head. In an instant she became aware of this. "Do me the greatest kindness of all," she said. "I beseech you to go away!"

"Ah, don't say that. Don't kill me!" he cried.

She clasped her hands; her eyes were streaming with tears.

"As you love me, as you pity me, leave me alone!"

He glared at her a moment through the dusk, and the next instant she felt his arms about her, and his lips on her own lips. His kiss was like a flash of lightning; when it was dark again she was free. She never looked about her; she only darted away from the spot. There were lights in the windows of the house; they shone far across the lawn. In an extraordinarily short time—for the distance was considerable—she had moved through the darkness (for she saw nothing) and reached the door. Here only she paused. She looked all about her; she listened a little; then she put her hand on the latch. She had not known where to turn; but she knew now. There was a very straight path.

Two days afterwards, Caspar Goodwood knocked at the door of the house in Wimpole Street in which Henrietta Stackpole occupied furnished lodgings. He had hardly removed his hand from the knocker when the door was opened, and Miss Stackpole herself stood

before him. She had on her bonnet and jacket; she was on the point of going out.

"Oh, good morning," he said, "I was in hope I should find Mrs. Osmond."

Henrietta kept him waiting a moment for her reply; but there was a good deal of expression about Miss Stackpole even when she was silent.

"Pray what led you to suppose she was here?"

"I went down to Gardencourt this morning, and the servant told me she had come to London. He believed she was to come to you."

Again Miss Stackpole held him—with an intention of perfect kindness—in suspense.

"She came here yesterday, and spent the night. But this morning she started for Rome."

Caspar Goodwood was not looking at her; his eyes were fastened on the doorstep.

"Oh, she started—" he stammered. And without finishing his phrase, or looking up, he turned away.

Henrietta had come out, closing the door behind her, and now she put out her hand and grasped his arm.

"Look here, Mr. Goodwood," she said; "just you wait!"

On which he looked up at her.

THE END.

before him. She had on her bonnet and jacket, and was on the point of going out. "Oh, good morning," he said, "I was in hope I should find Mrs. Gannon." "I have just been waiting a moment for her reply; but there was a good deal of expectation about Miss Stackpole even when she was silent. "I say what led you to suppose she was here?" "I went down to Gardener's this morning, and the surgeon told me she had come to London. He believed she was to come to you." "Again Miss Stackpole held him—with an intention of perfect kindness in her manner. "She came here yesterday and spent the night."

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Mr. Goodwood was not looking at her; his eyes were fastened on the door. "Oh, she started—" he murmured. And with out finishing his phrase, he turned away. "Hester had come out, closing the door behind her, and now she put her hand and grasped the door. "Look here, Mr. Goodwood," she said; "just you wait!" "On which he looked up at her."

THE END

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Shirley Brooks. The Silver Cord 3 v. Sooner or Later 3 v.

Miss Rhoda Broughton: Cometh up as a Flower 1 v. Not wisely, but too well 2 v. Red as a Rose is She 2 v. Tales for Christmas Eve 1 v. Nancy 2 v. Joan 2 v. Second Thoughts 2 v.

John Brown: Rab and his Friends, and other Tales 1 v.

Eliz. Barrett Browning: A Selection from her Poetry (w. portrait) 1 v. Aurora Leigh 1 v.

Robert Browning: Poetical Works (w. portrait) 2 v.

Bulwer (Lord Lytton): Pelham (w. portrait) 1 v. Eugene Aram 1 v. Paul Clifford 1 v. Zanoni 1 v. The Last Days of Pompeii 1 v. The Disowned 1 v. Ernest Maltravers 1 v. Alice 1 v. Eva, and the Pilgrims of the Rhine 1 v. Devereux 1 v. Godolphin, and Falkland 1 v. Rienzi 1 v. Night and Morning 1 v. The Last of the Barons 2 v. Athens 2 v. The Poems and Ballads of Schiller 1 v. Lucretia 2 v. Harold 2 v. King Arthur 2 v. The new Timon; St Ste-

phen's 1 v. The Caxtons 2 v. My Novel 4 v. What will he do with it? 4 v. The Dramatic Works 2 v. A Strange Story 2 v. Caxtoniana 2 v. The Lost Tales of Miletus 1 v. Miscellaneous Prose Works 4 v. The Odes and Epodes of Horace 2 v. Kenelm Chillingly 4 v. The Coming Race 1 v. The Parisians 4 v. Pausanias 1 v.

Henry Lytton Bulwer (Lord Dalling): Historical Characters 2 v. The Life of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston 3 v.

John Bunyan: The Pilgrim's Progress 1 v.

Buried Alone 1 v.

Miss Burney: Evelina 1 v.

Robert Burns: Poetical Works (w. portrait) 1 v.

Richard F. Burton: Mecca and Medina 3 v.

Mrs. B. H. Buxton: "Jennie of 'the Prince's'" 2 v. Won! 2 v. Great Grenfell Gardens 2 v. Nell—on and off the Stage 2 v. From the Wings 2 v.

Lord Byron: Poetical Works (w. portrait) 5 v.

Cameron: Across Africa 2 v.

Thomas Carlyle: The French Revolution 3 v. Frederick the Great 13 v. Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches 4 v. The Life of Friedrich Schiller 1 v.

Maria Louisa Charlesworth: Oliver of the Mill 1 v.

"Chronicles of the Schönberg-Cotta Family," Author of—Chronicles of the Schönberg-Cotta Family 2 v. The Draytons and the Davenants 2 v. On Both Sides of the Sea 2 v. Winifred Bertram 1 v. Diary of Mrs. Kitty Trevelyon 1 v. The Victory of the Vanquished 1 v. The Cottage by the Cathedral 1 v. Against the Stream 2 v. The Bertram Family 2 v. Conquering and to Conquer 1 v. Lapsed, but not Lost 1 v.

Frances Power Cobbe: Re-Echoes 1 v.

Coleridge: The Poems 1 v.

Chas. A. Collins: A Cruise upon Wheels 2 v.

Mortimer Collins: Sweet and Twenty 2 v. A Fight with Fortune 2 v.

Wilkie Collins: After Dark 1 v. Hide and Seek 2 v. A Plot in Private Life 1 v. The Woman in White 2 v. Basil 1 v. No Name 3 v. The Dead Secret 2 v. Antonina 2 v. Armadale 3 v. The Moonstone 2 v. Man and Wife 3 v. Poor Miss Finch 2 v. Miss or Mrs.? 1 v. The New Magdalen 2 v. The Frozen Deep 1 v. The Law and the Lady 2 v. The Two Destinies 1 v. My Lady's Money & Percy and the Prophet 1 v. The Haunted Hotel 1 v. Fallen Leaves 2 v. Jezebel's Daughter 2 v. The Black Robe 2 v.

"Cometh up as a Flower,"
Author of— *vide* Broughton.

Fenimore Cooper: The Spy (w. portrait) 1 v. The two Admirals 1 v. The Jack O'Lantern 1 v.

George L. Craik: Manual of English Literature & Language 2 v.

Mrs. Craik (Miss Mulock): John Halifax, Gentleman 2 v. The Head of the Family 2 v. A Life for a Life 2 v. A Woman's Thoughts about Women 1 v. Agatha's Husband 1 v. Romantic Tales 1 v. Domestic Stories 1 v. Mistress and Maid 1 v. The Ogilvies 1 v. Lord Erlistoun 1 v. Christian's Mistake 1 v. Bread upon the Waters 1 v. A Noble Life 1 v. Olive 2 v. Two Marriages 1 v. Studies from Life 1 v. Poems 1 v. The Woman's Kingdom 2 v. The Unkind Word

2 v. A Brave Lady 2 v. Hannah 2 v. Fair France 1 v. My Mother and I 1 v. The Little Lame Prince 1 v. Sermons out of Church 1 v. The Laurel Bush 1 v. A Legacy 2 v. Young Mrs. Jardine 2 v. His Little Mother 1 v.

Miss Georgiana Craik: Lost and Won 1 v. Faith Unwin's Ordeal 1 v. Leslie Tyrrell 1 v. Winifred's Wooing, and other Tales 1 v. Mildred 1 v. Esther Hill's Secret 2 v. Hero Trevelyan 1 v. Without Kith or Kin 2 v. Only a Butterfly 1 v. Sylvia's Choice; Theresa 2 v. Anne Warwick 1 v. Two Tales of Married Life 2 v. (Vol. I. Hard to Bear, Vol. II. *vide* M. C. Stirling.) Dorcas 2 v. Two Women 2 v.

Miss Cummins: The Lamp-lighter 1 v. Mabel Vaughan 1 v. El Fureidis 1 v. Haunted Hearts 1 v. "Daily News," War Correspondence 1877 by A. Forbes etc. 3 v.

De-Foe: Robinson Crusoe 1 v.

Charles Dickens: The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club (w. portrait) 2 v. American Notes 1 v. Oliver Twist 1 v. The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby 2 v. Sketches 1 v. The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit 2 v. A Christmas Carol; the Chimes; the Cricket on the Hearth 1 v. Master Humphrey's Clock (Old Curiosity Shop, Barnaby Rudge, and other Tales) 3 v. Pictures from Italy 1 v. The Battle of Life; the Haunted Man 1 v. Dombey and Son 3 v. David Copperfield 3 v. Bleak House 4 v. A Child's History of England (2 v. 8° M. 2, 70.) Hard Times 1 v. Little Dorrit 4 v. A Tale of two Cities 2 v. Hunted Down; The Uncommercial Traveller

1 v. Great Expectations 2 v. Christmas Stories 1 v. Our Mutual Friend 4 v. Somebody's Luggage; Mrs. Lirriper's Lodgings; Mrs. Lirriper's Legacy 1 v. Doctor Marigold's Prescriptions; Mugby Junction 1 v. No Thoroughfare 1 v. The Mystery of Edwin Drood 2 v. The Mudfog Papers 1 v. *Vide* Household Words, Novels and Tales, and John Forster.

Charles Dickens: The Letters of Charles Dickens edited by his Sister-in-law and his eldest Daughter 4 v.

B. Disraeli (Lord Beaconsfield): Coningsby 1 v. Sybil 1 v. Contarini Fleming (w. port.) 1 v. Alroy 1 v. Tancred 2 v. Venetia 2 v. Vivian Grey 2 v. Henrietta Temple 1 v. Lothair 2 v. Endymion 2 v.

W. Hepworth Dixon: Personal History of Lord Bacon 1 v. The Holy Land, 2 v. New America 2 v. Spiritual Wives 2 v. Her Majesty's Tower 4 v. Free Russia 2 v. History of two Queens 6 v. White Conquest 2 v. Diana, Lady Lyle 2 v.

The Earl and the Doctor: South Sea Bubbles 1 v.

Mrs. Edwardes: Archie Lovell 2 v. Steven Lawrence, Yeoman 2 v. Ought we to Visit her? 2 v. A Vagabond Heroine 1 v. Leah: A Woman of Fashion 2 v. A Blue-Stocking 1 v. Jet: Her Face or Her Fortune? 1 v. Vivian the Beauty 1 v.

Miss Amelia B. Edwards: Barbara's History 2 v. Miss Carew 2 v. Hand and Glove 1 v. Half a Million of Money 2 v. Debenham's Vow 2 v. In the Days of my Youth 2 v. Untrodden Peaks and unfrequented Valleys 1 v. Monsieur Maurice 1 v. Black Forest 1 v. A Poetry-Book of Elder Poets 1 v. A Thousand Miles up the Nile 2 v. A Poetry-Book of Modern Poets 1 v. Lord Brackenbury 2 v.

Miss M. Betham-Edwards: The Sylvestres 1 v. Felicia 2 v. Brother Gabriel 2 v. Forestalled 1 v.

George Eliot: Scenes of Clerical Life 2 v. Adam Bede 2 v. The Mill on the Floss 2 v. Silas Marner 1 v. Romola 2 v. Felix Holt 2 v. Daniel Deronda 4 v. The Lifted Veil and Brother Jacob 1 v. Impressions of Theophrastus Such 1 v.

Mrs. Elliot: Diary of an Idle Woman in Italy 2 v. Old Court Life in France 2 v. The Italians 2 v.

Essays and Reviews 1 v.

Estelle Russell 2 v.

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G. M. Fenn: The Parson o' Dumford 2 v. The Clerk of Portwick 2 v.

Fielding: The History of Tom Jones 2 v.

Five Centuries of the English Language and Literature 1 v.

A. Forbes: My Experiences of the War between France and Germany 2 v. Soldiering and Scribbling 1 v. See also "Daily News," War Correspondence.

Mrs. Forrester: Viva 2 v. Rhona 2 v. Roy and Viola 2 v.

John Forster: Life of Charles Dickens 6 v. Life and Times of Oliver Goldsmith 2 v.

Jessie Fothergill: The First Violin 2 v. Probation 2 v. Made or Marred and "One of Three" 1 v. Kith and Kin 2 v.

"Found Dead," Author of—*vide* James Payn.

Frank Fairleigh 2 v.

E. A. Freeman: The Growth of the English Constitution 1 v. Select Historical Essays 1 v.

Lady G. Fullerton: Ellen Middleton 1 v. Grantley Manor 2 v. Lady-Bird 2 v. Too Strange not to be True 2 v. Constance Sherwood 2 v. A stormy Life 2 v. Mrs. Gerald's Niece 2 v. The Notary's Daughter 1 v. The Lilies of the Valley 1 v. The Countess de Bonneval 1 v. Rose Leblanc 1 v. Seven Stories 1 v. The Life of Luisa de Carvajal 1 v. A Will and a Way 2 v.

Mrs. Gaskell: Mary Barton 1 v. Ruth 2 v. North and South 1 v. Lizzie Leigh 1 v. The Life of Charlotte Brontë 2 v. Lois the Witch 1 v. Sylvia's Lovers 2 v. A Dark Night's Work 1 v. Wives and Daughters 3 v. Cranford 1 v. Cousin Phillis, and other Tales 1 v.

Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone: Rome and the newest Fashions in Religion 1 v. Bulgarian Horrors; Russia in Turkistan 1 v. The Hellenic Factor in the Eastern Problem 1 v.

Goldsmith: Select Works: The Vicar of Wakefield; Poems; Dramas (w. portrait) 1 v.

Mrs. Gore: Castles in the Air 1 v. The Dean's Daughter 2 v. Progress and Prejudice 2 v. Mammon 2 v. A Life's Lessons 2 v. The two Aristocracies 2 v. Heckington 2 v.

Miss Grant: Victor Lascar 2 v. The Sun-Maid 2 v. My Heart's in the Highlands 2 v. Artiste 2 v.

W. A. Baillie Grohman: Tyrol and the Tyrolese 1 v.

"Guy Livingstone," Author of—Guy Livingstone 1 v. Sword and Gown 1 v. Barren Honour 1 v. Border and Bastille 1 v. Maurice Dering 1 v. Sans Merci 2 v. Breaking a Butterfly 2 v. Anteros 2 v. Hagarene 2 v.

J. Habberton: Helen's Babies & Other People's Children 1 v.

Mrs. S. C. Hall: Can Wrong be Right? 1 v. Marian 2 v.

Thomas Hardy: The Hand of Ethelberta 2 v. Far from the Madding Crowd 2 v. The Return of the Native 2 v. The Trumpet-Major 2 v.

Agnes Harrison: Martin's Vineyard 1 v.

Bret Harte: Prose and Poetry (Tales of the Argonauts; Spanish and American Legends; Condensed

Novels; Civic and Character Sketches; Poems) 2 v. Idyls of the Foothills 1 v. Gabriel Conroy 2 v. Two Men of Sandy Bar 1 v. Thankful Blossom 1 v. The Story of a Mine 1 v. Drift from Two Shores 1 v. An Heiress of Red Dog 1 v. The Twins of Table Mountain, etc. 1 v. Jeff Briggs's Love Story, etc. 1 v.

Sir H. Havelock, by the Rev. W. Brock, 1 v.

Nathaniel Hawthorne: The Scarlet Letter 1 v. Transformation 2 v. Passages from the English Note-Books 2 v.

"Heir of Redclyffe," Author of—*vide* Yonge.

Sir Arthur Helps: Friends in Council 2 v. Ivan de Biron 2 v.

Mrs. Hemans: The Select Poetical Works 1 v.

Mrs. Cashel Hoey: A Golden Sorrow 2 v. Out of Court 2 v.

Household Words conducted by Ch. Dickens. 1851-56. 36 v. NOVELS and TALES reprinted from Households Words by Ch. Dickens. 1856-59. 11 v.

Miss Howard: One Summer 1 v. Aunt Serena 1 v.

W. D. Howells: A Foregone Conclusion 1 v. The Lady of the Aroostook 1 v.

Thos. Hughes: Tom Brown's School Days 1 v.

Jean Ingelow: Off the Skelligs 3 v. Poems 2 v. Fated to be Free 2 v. Sarah de Berenger 2 v.

Washington Irving: Sketch Book (w. portrait) 1 v. Life of Mahomet 1 v. Successors of Mahomet 1 v. Oliver Goldsmith 1 v. Chronicles of Wolfert's Roost 1 v. Life of George Washington 5 v.

G. P. R. James: Morley Earnstein (w. portrait) 1 v. Forest Days 1 v. The False Heir 1 v. Arabella Stuart 1 v. Rose d'Albret 1 v. Arrah Neil 1 v.

Agincourt 1 v. The Smuggler 1 v.
The Step-Mother 2 v. Beauchamp
1 v. Heidelberg 1 v. The Gipsy 1 v.
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ley 1 v. Russell 2 v. The Convict 2 v.
Sir Theodore Broughton 2 v.

Henry James, Jr.: The
American 2 v. The Europeans
1 v. Daisy Miller 1 v. Roderick
Hudson 2 v. The Madonna of the
Future, etc. 1 v. Eugene Pickering,
etc. 1 v. Confidence 1 v. Washington
Square 2 v.

J. Cordy Jeaffreson: A Book
about Doctors 2 v. A Woman in
Spite of herself 2 v.

Mrs. Jenkin: "Who Breaks—
Pays" 1 v. Skirmishing 1 v. Once
and Again 2 v. Two French
Marriages 2 v. Within an Ace 1 v.
Jupiter's Daughters 1 v.

Edward Jenkins: Ginx's Ba-
by; Lord Bantam 2 v.

"Jennie of 'the Prince's,'"
Author of— *vide* Mrs. Buxton.

Douglas Jerrold: The His-
tory of St. Giles and St. James 2 v.
Men of Character 2 v.

"John Halifax," Author of—
vide Mrs. Craik.

"Johnny Ludlow," Author
of— *vide* Mrs. Wood.

Johnson: The Lives of the
English Poets 2 v.

Emily Jolly: Colonel Dacre 2 v.

"Joshua Davidson," Author
of— *vide* E. Lynn Linton.

Miss Kavanagh: Nathalie 2 v.
Daisy Burns 2 v. Grace Lee 2 v.
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mer and Winter in the Two Sicilies 2 v.
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Sybil's Second Love 2 v. Dora 2 v.
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Annie Keary: Oldbury 2 v.
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Kempis: *vide* Thomas a
Kempis.

R. B. Kimball: Saint Leger
1 v. Romance of Student Life
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Was he Successful? 1 v. To-Day
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A. W. Kinglake: Eothen 1 v.
Invasion of the Crimea v. 1-10.

Charles Kingsley: Yeast 1 v.
Westward ho! 2 v. Two Years
ago 2 v. Hypatia 2 v. Alton Locke 1 v.
Hereward the Wake 2 v. At Last 2 v.

Charles Kingsley: His Letters
and Memories of his Life edited by
his Wife 2 v.

Henry Kingsley: Ravenshoe
2 v. Austin Elliot 1 v. The Re-
collections of Geoffry Hamlyn 2 v.
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Leighton Court 1 v. Valentin 1 v.
Oakshott Castle 1 v. Reginald Hethe-
rege 2 v. The Grange Garden 2 v.

May Laffan: Flitters, Tatters,
and the Counsellor, etc. 1 v.

Charles Lamb: The Essays of
Elia and Eliana 1 v.

Mary Langdon: Ida May 1 v.
"Last of the Cavaliers,"
Author of— Last of the Cavaliers
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Holme Lee: *vide* Miss Parr.

S. Le Fanu: Uncle Silas 2 v.
Guy Deverell 2 v.

Mark Lemon: Wait for the
End 2 v. Loved at Last 2 v. Falkner
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Charles Lever: The O'Do-
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Burke of "Ours" 3 v. Jack Hin-

ton 2 v. The Daltons 4 v. The Dodd Family abroad 3 v. The Martins of Cro' Martin 3 v. The Fortunes of Glencore 2 v. Roland Cashel 3 v. Davenport Dunn 3 v. Con Cregan 2 v. One of Them 2 v. Maurice Tierney 2 v. Sir Jasper Carew 2 v. Barrington 2 v. A Day's Ride: a Life's Romance 2 v. Luttrell of Arran 2 v. Tony Butler 2 v. Sir Brook Fossbrooke 2 v. The Bramleights of Bishop's Folly 2 v. A Rent in a Cloud 1 v. That Boy of Norcott's 1 v. St. Patrick's Eve; Paul Gosslett's Confessions 1 v. Lord Kilgobbin 2 v.

G. H. Lewes: Ranthorpe 1 v. Physiology of Common Life 2 v. On Actors and the Art of Acting 1 v.

E. Lynn Linton: Joshua Davidson 1 v. Patricia Kemball 2 v. Atonement of Leam Dundas 2 v. The World well Lost 2 v. Under which Lord? 2 v. With a Silken Thread etc. 1 v. Todhunters' at Loanin' Head etc. 1 v. "My Love!" 2 v.

Laurence W. M. Lockhart: Mine is Thine 2 v.

Longfellow: Poetical Works (w. portrait) 3 v. The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri 3 v. The New-England Tragedies 1 v. The Divine Tragedy 1 v. Three Books of Song 1 v. The Masque of Pandora 1 v.

M. Lonsdale: Sister Dora 1 v. A Lost Battle 2 v.

Lutfullah: Autobiography of Lutfullah, by Eastwick 1 v.

Lord Lytton: *vide* Bulwer.

Robert Lord Lytton (Owen Meredith): Poems 2 v. Fables in Song 2 v.

Lord Macaulay: History of

England (w. portrait) 10 v. Critical and Historical Essays 5 v. Lays of Ancient Rome 1 v. Speeches 2 v. Biographical Essays 1 v. William Pitt, Atterbury 1 v. (See also Trevelyan).

Justin McCarthy: Waterdale Neighbours 2 v. Lady Disdain 2 v. Miss Misanthrope 2 v. A History of our own Times 5 v. Donna Quixote 2 v.

George MacDonald: Alec Forbes of Howglen 2 v. Annals of a Quiet Neighbourhood 2 v. David Elginbrod 2 v. The Vicar's Daughter 2 v. Malcolm 2 v. St. George and St. Michael 2 v. The Marquis of Lossie 2 v. Sir Gibbie 2 v. Mary Marston 2 v.

Mrs. Mackarness: Sunbeam Stories 1 v. A Peerless Wife 2 v. A Mingled Yarn 2 v.

Charles McKnight: Old Fort Duquesne 2 v.

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Mrs. Macquoid: Patty 2 v. Miriam's Marriage 2 v. Pictures across the Channel 2 v. Too Soon 1 v. My Story 2 v. Diane 2 v. Beside the River 2 v.

"Mademoiselle Mori," Author of— Mademoiselle Mori 2 v. Denise 1 v. Madame Fontenoy 1 v. On the Edge of the Storm 1 v. The Atelier du Lys 2 v.

Lord Mahon: *vide* Stanhope.

E. S. Maine: Scarscliff Rocks 2 v.

R. Blachford Mansfield: The Log of the Water Lily 1 v.

Marmorne 1 v.

Capt. Marryat: Jacob Faithful (w. portrait) 1 v. Percival Keene 1 v. Peter Simple 1 v. Japhet 1 v. Monsieur Violet 1 v. The Settlers 1 v. The Mission

1 v. The Privateer's-Man 1 v.
The Children of the New-Forest
1 v. Valerie 1 v. Mr. Midshipman
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Florence Marryat: Love's
Conflict 2 v. For Ever and Ever
2 v. The Confessions of Gerald
Estcourt 2 v. Nelly Brooke 2 v.
Véronique 2 v. Petronel 2 v. Her
Lord and Master 2 v. The Prey of the
Gods 1 v. Life of Captain Marryat 1 v.
Mad Dumaresq 2 v. No Intentions 2 v.
Fighting the Air 2 v. A Star and a
Heart 1 v. The Poison of Asps 1 v. A
Lucky Disappointment 1 v. My own
Child 2 v. Her Father's Name 2 v. A
Harvest of Wild Oats 2 v. A Little
Stepson 1 v. Written in Fire 2 v.
Her World against a Lie 2 v. A
Broken Blossom 2 v. The Root of all
Evil 2 v. The Fair-haired Alda 2 v.
With Cupid's Eyes 2 v. My Sister
the Actress 2 v.

Mrs. Marsh: Ravenscliffe 2 v.
Emilia Wyndham 2 v. Castle
Avon 2 v. Aubrey 2 v. The Heiress
of Haughton 2 v. Evelyn Marston
2 v. The Rose of Ashurst 2 v.

Emma Marshall: Mrs. Main-
waring's Journal 1 v.

Helen Mathers: "Cherry
Ripe!" 2 v. "Land o' the Leal" 1 v.
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Mehalah 1 v.

Whyte Melville: Kate Cov-
entry 1 v. Holmby House 2 v.
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The Gladiators 2 v. The Brookes
of Bridlemere 2 v. Cerise 2 v. The
Interpreter 2 v. The White Rose 2 v.
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Losing Hazard 1 v. Sarchedon 2 v.
Uncle John 2 v. Katerfelto 1 v. Sister
Louise 1 v. Rosine 1 v. Roy's Wife
2 v. Black but Comely 2 v. Riding
Recollections 1 v.

George Meredith: The Or-
deal of Feverel 2 v. Beauchamp's
Career 2 v. The Tragic Comedians 1 v.

Owen Meredith: *vide* Robert
Lord Lytton.

Milton: Poetical Works 1 v.

Miss Florence Montgomery:
Misunderstood 1 v. Thrown Together
2 v. Thwarted 1 v. Wild Mike 1 v.
Seaforth 2 v.

"Molly Bawn," Author of—
Molly Bawn 2 v. Mrs. Geoffrey 2 v.

Moore: Poetical Works (w.
portrait) 5 v.

Lady Morgan's Memoirs 3 v.

Henry Morley: Of English
Literature in the Reign of
Victoria. With Facsimiles of the
Signatures of Authors in the
Tauchnitz Edition [v. 2000].

E. C. Grenville: Murray: The
Member for Paris 2 v. Young Brown
2 v. The Boudoir Cabal 3 v. French
Pictures in English Chalk (1st Series)
2 v. The Russians of To-day 1 v.
French Pictures in English Chalk
(2nd Series) 2 v. Strange Tales 1 v.
That Artful Vicar 2 v.

"My little Lady," Author of—
vide E. Frances Poynter.

New Testament [v. 1000].

Mrs. Newby: Common Sense
2 v.

Dr. J. H. Newman: Callista 1 v.

Nina Balatka 1 v.

"No Church," Author of—No
Church 2 v. Owen:—a Waif 2 v.

Lady Augusta Noel: From
Generation to Generation 1 v.

Hon. Mrs. Norton: Stuart of
Dunleath 2 v. Lost and Saved 2 v.
Old Sir Douglas 2 v.

Novels and Tales *vide* House-
hold Words.

Not Easily Jealous 2 v.

Mrs. Oliphant: Passages in
the Life of Mrs. Margaret Mait-
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of the Mortimers 2 v. Agnes 2 v. Madonna Mary 2 v. The Minister's Wife 2 v. The Rector, and the Doctor's Family 1 v. Salem Chapel 2 v. The Perpetual Curate 2 v. Miss Marjoribanks 2 v. Ombra 2 v. Memoir of Count de Montalembert 2 v. May 2 v. Innocent 2 v. For Love and Life 2 v. A Rose in June 1 v. The Story of Valentine and his Brother 2 v. Whiteladies 2 v. The Curate in Charge 1 v. Phoebe, Junior 2 v. Mrs. Arthur 2 v. Carità 2 v. Young Musgrave 2 v. The Primrose Path 2 v. Within the Precincts 3 v. The greatest Heiress in England 2 v. He that will not when he may 2 v. Harry Joscelyn 2 v.

Ossian: Poems 1 v.

Ouida: Idalia 2 v. Tricotrín 2 v. Puck 2 v. Chandos 2 v. Strathmore 2 v. Under two Flags 2 v. Folle-Farine 2 v. A Leaf in the Storm; A Dog of Flanders & other Stories 1 v. Cecil Castlemaine's Gage 1 v. Madame la Marquise 1 v. Pascarel 2 v. Held in Bondage 2 v. Two little Wooden Shoes 1 v. Signa (w. portrait) 3 v. In a Winter City 1 v. Ariadne 2 v. Friendship 2 v. Moths 3 v. Pipistrello 1 v. A Village Commune 2 v.

Miss Parr (Holme Lee): Basil Godfrey's Caprice 2 v. For Richer, for Poorer 2 v. The Beautiful Miss Barrington 2 v. Her Title of Honour 1 v. Echoes of a Famous Year 1 v. Katherine's Trial 1 v. Bessie Fairfax 2 v. Ben Milner's Wooing 1 v. Straightforward 2 v. Mrs. Denys of Cote 2 v.

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"Paul Ferroll," Author of—Paul Ferroll 1 v. Year after Year 1 v. Why Paul Ferroll killed his Wife 1 v.

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1 v. Gwendoline's Harvest 1 v. Like Father, like Son 2 v. Not Wooed, but Won 2 v. Cecil's Tryst 1 v. A Woman's Vengeance 2 v. Murphy's Master 1 v. In the Heart of a Hill 1 v. At Her Mercy 2 v. The Best of Husbands 2 v. Walter's Word 2 v. Halves 2 v. Fallen Fortunes 2 v. What He cost Her 2 v. By Proxy 2 v. Less Black than we're Painted 2 v. Under one Roof 2 v. High Spirits 1 v. High Spirits (Second Series) 1 v. A Confidential Agent 2 v. From Exile 2 v. A Grape from a Thorn 2 v.

Miss Fr. M. Peard: One Year 2 v. The Rose-Garden 1 v. Un-awares 1 v. Thorpe Regis 1 v. A Winter Story 1 v. A Madrigal 1 v. Cartouche 1 v. Mother Molly 1 v.

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Pope: Select Poetical Works (w. portrait) 1 v.

E. Frances Poynter: My little Lady 2 v. Ersilia 2 v. Among the Hills 1 v.

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W. F. Rae: Westward by Rail 1 v.

Charles Reade: "It is never too late to mend" 2 v. "Love me little, love me long" 1 v. The Cloister and the Hearth 2 v. Hard Cash 3 v. Put Yourself in his Place 2 v. A Terrible Temptation 2 v. Peg Woffington 1 v. Christie Johnstone 1 v. A Simpleton 2 v. The Wandering Heir 1 v.

"Recommended to Mercy," Author of—Recommended to Mercy 2 v. Zoe's 'Brand' 2 v.

Richardson: Clarissa Harlowe 4 v.

Mrs. Riddell (F. G. Trafford): George Geith of Fen Court 2 v. Maxwell Drewitt 2 v. The Race for Wealth 2 v. Far above Rubies 2 v. The Earl's Promise 2 v. Mortomley's Estate 2 v.

Rev. W. Robertson: Sermons 4 v.

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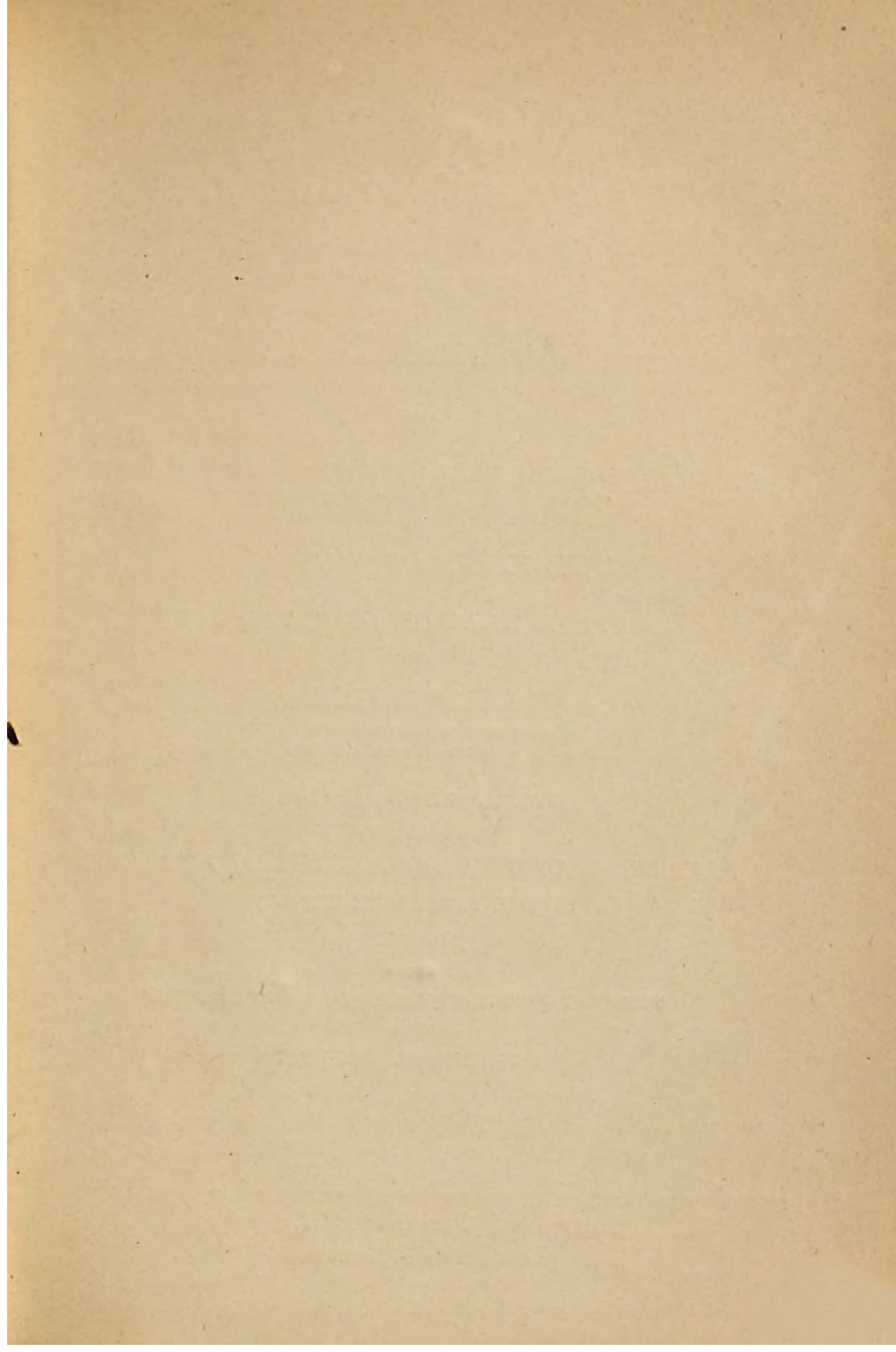
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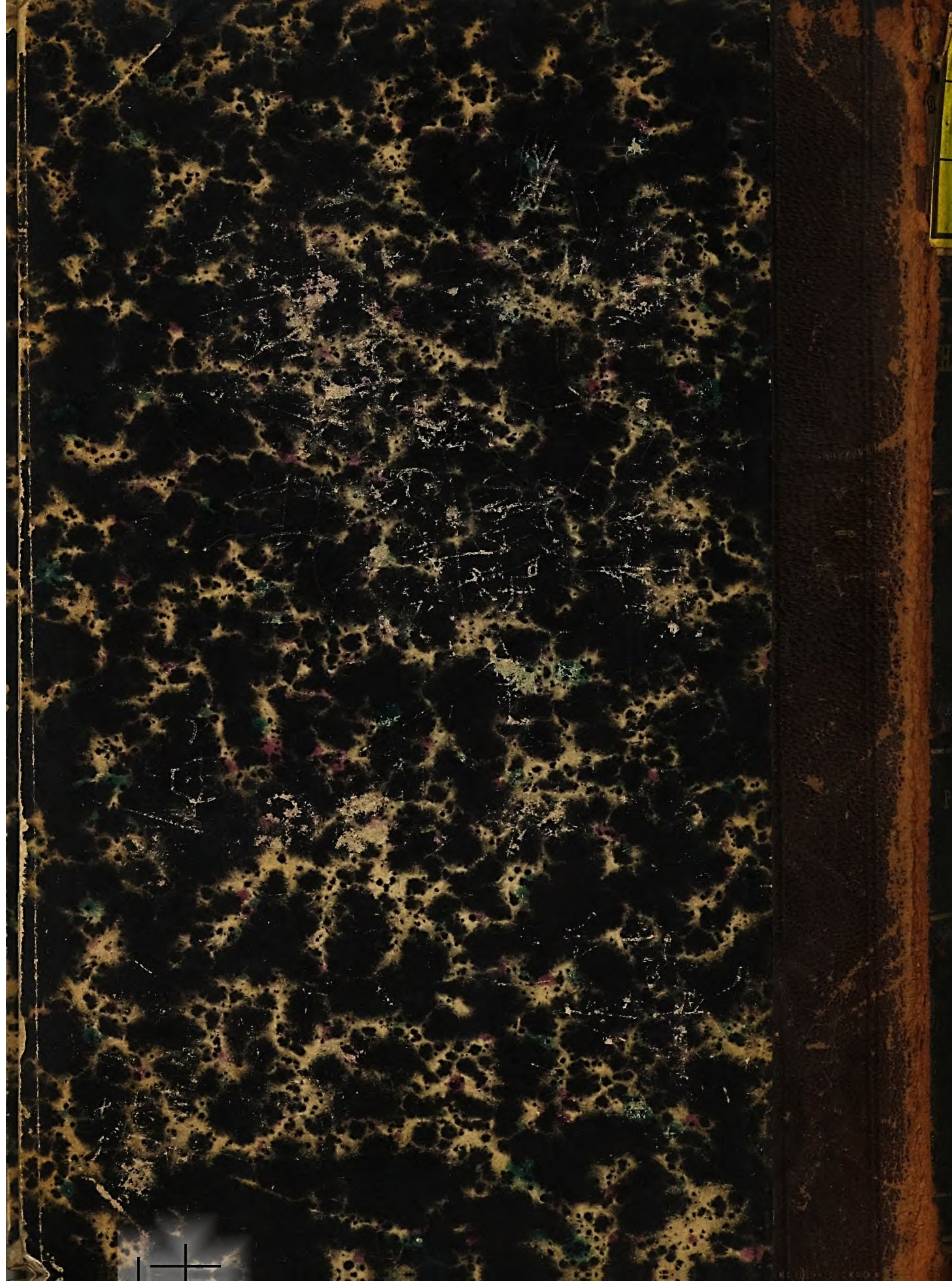
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